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AUGUST 2026 ■ USChess.org

Going National

IM Liam Putnam wins Edmondson Cup
at 2026 National Open



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Max Euwe World Champion!

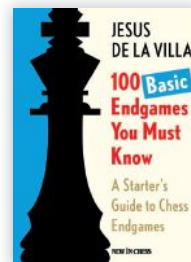
Paul van der Sterren & Erwin l'Ami

Max Euwe's tenure as World Chess Champion has often been dismissed as a brief intermezzo. This book sets the record straight. Drawing on contemporary sources and modern game analysis, it shows that Euwe truly belonged at the very top – and that for a while he was the strongest player in the world.

100 Basic Endgames You Must Know

Jesús de la Villa

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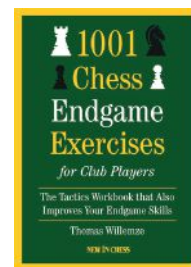
Fred Das & Jeroen Terlingen

Godfried Vos and blind detective Gino Cancellara uncover a Mafia plot targeting the famous Marostica chess festival. Their search for answers draws them into the shadowy world of the 'Fourth Mafia' and the local history. This literary thriller blends suspense, history, chess, and Italian cuisine.

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Chess Master Thomas Willemze takes club players beyond the basics with 1001 endgame puzzles. Train advanced tactical patterns, sharpen calculation, and build the intuition and practical skills to win more games in club and tournament play.



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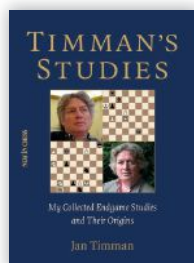
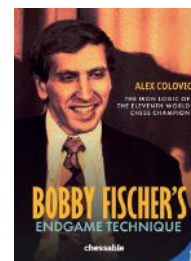
Shermaz Kennedy

When a young woman from India moves to America and reaches out to Bobby Fischer, it sparks a lifelong bond few ever knew existed. *Bobby Fischer's Chess Queen* is a true story of friendship, resilience, and the hidden heart of a genius. Discover the love that defied distance and fame.

Bobby Fischer's Endgame Technique

Alex Colovic

Discover Bobby Fischer's endgame secrets. Alex Colovic reveals how the 11th World Champion applied relentless pressure with engine-like precision. Learn through clear explanations and exercises to improve your chess at every level.



Timman's Studies

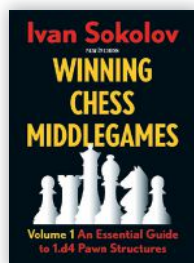
Jan Timman

In *Timman's Studies*, Jan Timman presents 160 of his finest endgame compositions, revealing their origins and creative process. A unique glimpse into the mind of a grandmaster who found artistry and inspiration in endgame studies.

The Grandmaster

Axel Smith

From bestselling chess grandmaster Axel Smith comes *The Grandmaster* – a powerful novel of obsession, ambition, and sacrifice that reveals the human cost of brilliance. Perfect for fans of *The Queen's Gambit*.



Winning Chess Middlegames – Revised Edition

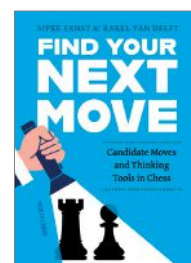
Ivan Sokolov

Ever wondered why grandmasters take only seconds to see what's really going on in a chess position? It's all about structures, as Ivan Sokolov explains in this groundbreaking book. It addresses the often ignored but extremely important topic of pawn structures, divided into four main types: doubled pawns, isolated pawns, hanging pawns and pawn majorities.

Find Your Next Move

Sipke Ernst and Karel van Delft

The candidate move is perhaps the most elusive concept in chess theory. It seems straightforward and methodical enough: when considering a move, you make a list of 'candidates' in your mind, compare their merits, and make your choice. But how do you determine what a candidate move is, and how do you proceed from there?



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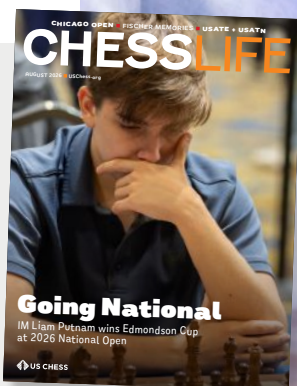
An interview with IM John Donaldson

BY BRIAN KAREN

ON THE COVER

The National Open is one of the top events on the U.S. chess calendar, and this year's event was no exception. With side event after side event, there's something for everyone! IM and soon-to-be-GM Liam Putnam will have fond memories to go along with his 2026 Edmondson trophy!

PHOTOGRAPH BY TIM HANKS





CAIRNS CUP

AUGUST 10 - 20

SAINTLOUISCHESSCLUB | YOUTUBE | TWITCH

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GM ALEXANDRA KOSTENIUK | **IM** CARISSA YIP | **IM** STAVROULA TSOLAKIDOU

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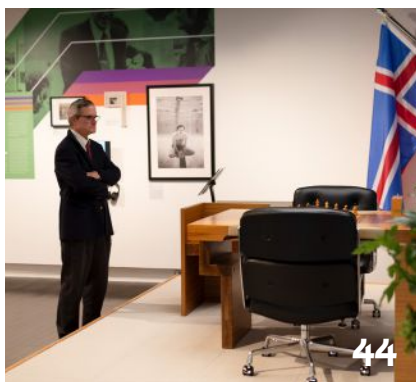
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IM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN (National Open) is an Armenian-American woman grandmaster and international master. Since moving to the United States in 2001, she has been a regular participant in U.S. Women's Championships and a stalwart member of our international teams. Her "Getting to Work" column appears monthly in these pages.



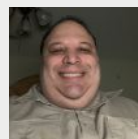
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IM JASON LIANG (Chicago Open) is the 2022 Grand prix winner, with victories at multiple youth and scholastic championships. With his norm at the Chicago Open, he has fulfilled all the requirements for the GM title and awaits confirmation from FIDE.



BRIAN KAREN (Fischer Legacy) is a US Chess expert and scholastic coach. One of the early admins on ICC, he created and maintains popular chesscentric Facebook groups, including the Chess Book Collectors and FIDE World Championship 2023 groups.



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GRANDCHESSTOUR | YOUTUBE | TWITCH**

Fabiano
CARUANA

Vincent
KEYMER

Anish
GIRI

Wesley
SO

Javokhir
SINDAROV

Praggnanandhaa
RAMESHBABU

Jorden
VAN FOREEST

Levon
ARONIAN

Lenier
DOMINGUEZ

Awonder
LIANG



**SINQUEFIELD
CUP**

**AUGUST 10 - 20 | WATCH LIVE
GRANDCHESSTOUR | YOUTUBE | TWITCH**

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KEYMER

Alireza
FIROUZJA

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Javokhir
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Jorden
VAN FOREEST

Maxime
VACHIER-LAGRAVE

Levon
ARONIAN



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**Youngest-Ever USA
Female to Earn the IM Title!**

Alice Lee

"I'd like to thank the U.S. Chess Trust for their support in my chess career. I have had the honor of receiving the prestigious Samford Fellowship, which has given me encouragement and support for my chess."



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The Super GM Title: A Proposal

No one would consider a grandmaster and a candidate master to be the same. The minimum rating for a grandmaster is 2500, and for candidates masters it is 2200. There is a 300-point gap between the two titles. But this is smaller than gap between Magnus Carlsen and a 2500-rated GM. Nevertheless, Magnus and the 2500 both bear the same title of grandmaster. There should be a new title that distinguishes top players from other grandmasters.

Many players informally refer to 2700s as "Super GMs," though there is no official title for them. There are some issues with using the 2700 rating as a cutoff. First, there may be rating inflation or deflation over time. Today, there are dozens of 2700s, but back in 1977, there were none. Second, the meaning of a 2700 rating is hard to explain to the public. Have you ever tried to tell a non-chess player what a grandmaster is? They probably know that grandmasters are "really really good at chess," but most of them don't want to hear all the details about the norms and what a 2500 rating means.

My solution: "A super grandmaster (SGM) is any player who has been ranked in the world's top 10." It allows for elite players to distinguish themselves from other grandmasters and is easily explained to the public. I went through the FIDE's rating lists and assembled a list of 88 super grandmasters. Readers will probably recognize most or all of their names, since they are all top players.

Nodirbek Abdusattorov, Michael Adams, Viswanathan Anand, Ulf Andersson, Levon Aronian, Vladislav Artemiev, Etienne Bacrot, Evgeny Bareev, Alexander Beliavsky, Mikhail Botvinnik, Magnus Carlsen,

Fabiano Caruana, Liren Ding, Leinier Dominguez Perez, Jaan Ehvest, Pavel Eljanov, Vladimir Epishin, Arjun Erigaisi, Alireza Firouzja, Robert James Fischer, Vugar Gashimov, Boris Gelfand, Efim P Geller, Kiril Georgiev, Florin Gheorghiu, Anish Giri, Alexander Grischuk, Gukesh D, Mikhail Gurevich, Pentala Harikrishna, Vlastimil Hort, Robert Huebner, Vasyi Ivanchuk, Dmitry Jakovenko, Gata Kamsky, Sergey Karjakin, Anatoly Karpov, Garry Kasparov, Lubomir Kavalek, Vincent Keymer, Alexander Khalifman, Viktor Korchnoi, Vladimir Kramnik, Michal Krasenkow, Bent Larsen, Peter Leko, Ljubomir Ljubojevic, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, Henrique Mecking, Anthony J Miles, Alexander Morozevich, Sergei Movsesian, Hikaru Nakamura, Ian Nepomniachtchi, Predrag Nikolic, John Nunn, Tigran Petrosian, Judit Polgar, Lev Polugaevsky, Ruslan Ponomarev, Lajos Portisch, Praggnanandhaa R, Lev Psakhis, Teimour Radjabov, Richard Rapport, Zoltan Ribli, Valery Salov, Yasser Seirawan, Alexei Shirov, Nigel Short, Javokhir Sindarov, Vassily Smyslov, Wesley So, Andrei Sokolov, Boris Spassky, Jonathan Speelman, Peter Svidler, Mikhail Tal, Jan Timman, Veselin Topalov, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Rafael Vaganian, Loek Van Wely, Yue Wang, Yi Wei, Yangyi Yu, Leonid Yudasin, Artur Yusupov.

Matthew Wilson
via email

John Hartmann responds:

Is this a really a problem? I'm not convinced. (And I certainly don't think we need to retroactively honor the dead with a new title.) But the idea that the GM title has been diluted is periodically kicked around, and this seems as reasonable a solution as any. Readers, what say ye?

Send your letters to letters@uschess.org. Letters are subject to editing for style, length, and content.

U.S. Teams Set for 46th Olympiad

The Open and Women's teams competing for the U.S. at the 46th FIDE Olympiad (Sept. 15-27, Samarkand, Uzbekistan) mix the veterans who have brought the U.S. team their most recent successes with newcomers who have reached the next level since the last games in 2024.

The Open team is looking for their first gold medals since 2016. They took silver medals home from Budapest two years ago, and U.S. Champion GM Fabiano Caruana, GM Wesley So, and Board 4 silver medalist Levon Aronian return from that squad. Caruana and So were also on the first-place U.S. team in 2016. They're joined by GMs Hans Niemann and Awonder Liang, making their Olympiad debuts.

The Women's team won bronze medals in Budapest, their first podium finish since 2000. They're looking to improve on that with Olympiad veterans GM Irina Krush and IM Tatev Abrahamyan (playing in her seventh Olympiad) joined by IMs Carissa Yip and

Alice Lee, who won Board 2 gold and Board 4 silver, respectively. Joining them will be IM-elect Rose Atwell, making her own Olympiad debut.

The U.S. has a long pedigree in the Olympiad, which has brought chess countries together from all over the world since 1924. American teams dominated in the 1930s before the long period of Soviet dominance after World War II and lasting until the dissolution of the country in 1991. Since then, American performance at the Olympiad has been up and down, winning in 1976 but not again until 2016.

Sending two teams to the Olympiad is like a lot of things in life: Doing it right isn't cheap. And like many U.S. teams competing internationally, we are not supported by our government but through private donations, fundraising, and sponsorships. That's where you come in.

We need your help to get these players to Samarkand, and to get them the coaching

they need to bring gold medals home in the 250th anniversary year of our nation. Your support sends a clear signal both about the importance of chess in the U.S. and its importance to you.

Show your love of the game and support our team by becoming a part of Olympiad history and donating at <https://new.uschess.org/olympiad>. ♠



46th★Olympiad



Irina Krush



Awonder Liang



Carissa Yip



Levon Aronian



Alice Lee



Tatev Abrahamyan



Fabiano Caruana



Rose Atwell



Wesley So



Hans Niemann

NATIONAL CHESSDAY

National Chess Day is Saturday, Oct. 10. For any event that includes "National Chess Day" in the event title and is held that day, US Chess is offering:

- ▶ A free email blast. Make sure that "National Chess Day" is part of your subject line. On the payment screen, select "No charge." Also, make sure the demographic you are sending this to is reasonable; generally, this will be local or regional. Do not send to the entire membership.
- ▶ Free rating fees. Use the payment code NCD2026FREE. This is case-sensitive. Be sure to rate the event by 11:59 p.m. Central on Wednesday, Oct. 14, to ensure the waiver of fees.
- ▶ Free online TLA. Online TLAs are always free, of course, not just for National Chess Day. But we want to make sure you are aware of this option too as you promote your event. See "How to Create a TLA" at new.uschess.org/information-new-members.

Here's to a successful National Chess Day for all!

Another way to celebrate National Chess Day is by making a gift to US Chess! What better way to celebrate National Chess Day than by sharing your passion and love for the game? Your donation will help ensure that the chess programs and events that you care so much about will continue for years to come and advance our mission to "empower people, enrich lives, and enhance communities through chess."

To make a tax-deductible gift to US Chess, just click on DONATE at uschess.org, and choose the program or fund that you would like to support. Thank you for the impact you are making on so many lives, and for your commitment to US Chess!

Please direct any questions to John Hartmann at john.hartmann@uschess.org, and feel free to send him your best photos for possible use in *Chess Life*, *Chess Life Kids*, and Chess Life Online. On social media, use the hashtag #NationalChessDay. ♠



Independence Day

It was a semiquincentennial celebration for the ages over Independence Day weekend, with both the World Open and the Naroditsky Memorial contested.

The **54th World Open** (July 1-5, Washington, D.C.) lived up to its name with an international cast of winners: Chinese GM Haowen Xue, Indian GM Praneeth Vuppala, and American IM Evan Park finished in joint first at 7½/9, good for \$11,667.67 each. Xue took home an extra \$1,000 for winning an Armageddon playoff over Park.

Meanwhile, the inaugural **Naroditsky Memorial** (July 3-5, Charlotte, North Carolina) featured a slew of memorable events including a Creator Invitational blitz tournament swept by IM John Bartholomew with a perfect 9/9. The blitz and rapid main events were both won in style by GM Javokhir Sindarov.

We'll have complete coverage of both events here in the coming months. Until then, be sure to check out JJ Lang's reporting on the World Open at *Chess Life Online*, as well as IM Eric Liu's account of his experience in Charlotte.

Cherry Blossom

Memorial Day weekend is another busy weekend for American chess, with the Chicago Open traditionally the biggest draw — see IM Jason Liang's report on the 2026 Chicago Open on page 40. Now in its 13th year, the Cherry Blossom Classic (May 21-25, Sterling, Virginia) draws East Coasters looking to spend their Memorial Days at the board.

GMs Santiago Avila Pavas and Fidel Corrales Jimenez tied for first with 7½/9. IM Oleksii Bilych took sole third a half-point back at 7, while no fewer than nine players tied for fourth place with 6 points: GMs Jose Gabriel Cardoso Cardoso and Titas Stremavicius, WGM Jennifer Yu, IMs Thomas Bartell, L.S.T De Silva, and Kevin George; FMs Aditeya Das and Daniel Tabuenca Mendataurigoitia, and CM Tyson Brady.

We enjoyed Corrales Jimenez's Cherry Blossom brilliancy in last month's First Moves column, but he was also subjected to a thunderbolt from Bilych in Round 6.



Above: GM Javokhir Sindarov and Daniel Naroditsky's mother, Elena Schuman, at the 2026 Naroditsky Memorial.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B90)

IM Oleksii Bilych (2551)

GM Fidel Corrales Jimenez (2558)

Cherry Blossom Classic (6), Sterling, 05.24.2026

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Nb3 e6 7. g4 b5 8. a3 Bb7 9. Bg2 Nc6 10. h4 Rc8 11. Qe2 Ne5 12. g5 Nfd7 13. f4 Nc4 14. f5 e5 15. Nd2 Ncb6 16. Nf1 h6 17. Qh5 Rxc3! 18. bxc3 Qc7 19. Bd2 Nc4 20. Qe2 Nc5 21. Ng3 hgx5 22. hxg5 Rxh1+ 23. Bxh1 Na4 24. f6?! gxf6 25. gxf6 Qc5 26. Kf1 Bc8 27. Bg5 Nxc3 28. Qf2 Qc7 29. Bf3 Be6 30. Kg2 d5 31. exd5 Bc5?



After inspired play, including an atypical Exchange sacrifice in the Sicilian, Corrales Jimenez likely underestimated White's next moves.

32. dxe6! Bxf2 33. Rh1!

Threatening mate is worth more than a queen, especially when White quickly gets it back with interest.

33. ... fxe6 34. Rh8+ Kd7 35. Rh7+ Kd6 36. Rxc7 Kxc7 37. Kxf2 Nd6 38. Bd2 Nd5 39. Ne4 Nxe4+ 40. Bxe4 Nxf6 41. Ke3 Nd5+ 42. Kd3 Kb6 43. Bxd5 exd5 44. Bc3 d4 45. Bb4 a5 46. Ke4 axb4 47. axb4 Kc7 48. Kxe5 Kc6 49. Kxd4 Kd6 50. c3, Black resigned.

Mike Hoffpauir directed on behalf of Capital Area Chess.

Back to Chitown

Chicago played host to two more major events in recent months. The **2026 Chicago Summer Open** (June 19-21, Schaumburg, Ill.) was directed by Daniel Wilson for his Wilson Chess affiliate, drawing 311 players over six sections.

Armenian GM Zaven Andriasian notched the tournament win with 4½/5. His final round victory over IM Sam Schminkel featured a tough grind in a rook and pawn ending.

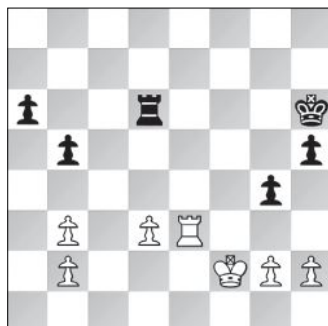
SICILIAN DEFENSE, TAIMANOV VARIATION (B47)

GM Zaven Andriasian (2652)

IM Sam Schmkel (2563)

Chicago Summer Open (5), Schaumburg, 06.21.2026

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nc6 5. Nc3 Qc7 6. f4 a6 7. Be3 b5 8. Bd3 Bb7 9. Qf3 Nf6 10. Nb3 Nb4 11. Bd4 Be7 12. 0-0 0-0 13. Qh3 Nxd3 14. cxd3 d6 15. Rac1 Qd7 16. e5 Nd5 17. Ne4 dxe5 18. fxe5 f5 19. exf6 e.p. Nxf6 20. Nxf6+ Bxf6 21. Bxf6 gxf6 22. Qg4+ Qg7 23. Qxe6+ Kh8 24. Rc2 f5 25. Qe3 Bd5 26. Qd4 Bxb3 27. Qxg7+ Kxg7 28. axb3 Rad8 29. Rf3 Rd4 30. Rg3+ Rg4 31. Rc7+ Kg6 32. Rc6+ Kg5 33. Rh3 Rf6 34. Rc7 h5 35. Kf2 Rd6 36. Rg7+ Kh6 37. Rxg4 fxg4 38. Re3



38. ... Kg5 39. Ke2 Kf5 40. Re4 Rc6 41. Kd2 Rc7 42. g3 Rc6 43. Rf4+ Ke6 44. d4 Rc8 45. Rf1 Rc7 46. Kd3 Rc8 47. Re1+ Kd6 48. Re5 Rh8 49. Rg5 h4 50. Rxg4 hxg3 51. hxg3 Rh2 52. Rg6+ Kd5 53. Rxa6 Rxb2 54. Kc3 Rf2 55. Kb4 Kxd4 56. Rd6+ Ke5 57. Rb6 Rf3 58. Rxb5+ Kf6 59. Rb6+ Kf7 60. Rb7+ Kf8 61. Rb8+ Kf7 62. Kc5 Rxg3 63. b4 Ke7 64. Kc6 Rc3+ 65. Kb6 Kd7 66. b5 Rb3 67. Ka7 Rb1 68. b6 Rb2 69. Rh8 Kc6 70. Rh6+ Kd7 71. b7, Black resigned.

Ranked first in the 2026 Chicago Summer Blitz by more than 600 rating points, Andriasian mowed through the field to tie for first with 8/8. He shared top honors with Mihir Shah, who also scored 8/8 in just his second US Chess-rated event.

But Shah is no beginner: He was hailed in 2024 as “the most underrated player in India” by Sagar Shah, and he boasts an online bullet rating over 2900! Shah even played for Team MGD1 in the 2024 World Rapid and Blitz Team Championship as their amateur board. He followed up his Chicago performance with a shared first place at the \$700 FIDE Blitz at the Marshall Chess Club on June 26, defeating IMs Alexander Katz

IM Sam Schmkel,
2022 U.S. Open



and Tani Adewumi along the way.

The 19th **Chicago Class** (July 17-19, Wheeling, Ill.) did the Chicago Open literally one better, with the very Chicago number of 312 players across seven sections. The Open Section was won by Schmkel and GM Jianchao Zhou, who both overcame Round 2 draws to finish a full point ahead of the field at 4½/5. Their fifth-round games were chaotic slugfests.

BENONI DEFENSE, TAIMANOV VARIATION (A67)

GM Jianchao Zhou (2669)

FM Avi Kaplan (2367)

Chicago Class (5), Wheeling, 07.19.2026

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 e6 4. Nc3 exd5 5. cxd5 d6 6. e4 g6 7. f4 Bg7 8. Bb5+ Nfd7 9. a4 Qh4+ 10. g3 Qd8 11. Nf3 0-0 12. 0-0 Na6 13. f5 Nf6 14. Bg5 h6 15. Bxf6 Qxf6 16. g4 c4 17. Qd2 Nc5 18. Bxc4 Bd7 19. Rae1 Rae8 20. Bd3 a6 21. Bc2 b5 22. h4 Qd8 23. g5 hxg5 24. hxg5 b4 25. Nd1 b3 26. Bb1



26. ... Nxa4 27. f6 Bxf6 28. gxf6 Qxf6 29. Ng5 Qg7 30. Kg2 Re5 31. Rh1 Bg4 32. Nh7 Bxd1 33. Rxd1 Rc8 34. Rdf1 f5 35. Qg5 fxe4 36. Nf6+ Kf7 37. Ng4+ Rf5

38. Rxf5+ gxf5 39. Qxf5+ Ke7 40. Rh7, Black resigned.

KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE (E73)

IM Sam Schmkel (2566)

Jonathan Kogen (2321)

Chicago Class (5), Wheeling, 07.19.2026

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. Be2 0-0 6. Be3 e5 7. d5 Na6 8. g4 Nc5 9. f3 a5 10. Qd2 Ne8 11. h4 f5 12. exf5 gxf5 13. h5 e4 14. 0-0-0 a4 15. h6 Bh8 16. Rh5 a3 17. Rg5+ Kf7 18. b4 Na4 19. Nxa4 Rxa4 20. Kc2 Qf6 21. Kb3 Ra8 22. fxe4 Bd7 23. b5 c6 24. dxc6 bxc6 25. gxf5 cxb5 26. Nf3 Qb2+ 27. Qxb2 axb2 28. e5 bxc4+ 29. Bxc4+ Ke7



30. Kxb2?!

30. Rg7+! first is cleaner, with the idea (if Black takes on g7) of f5-f6 and a pawn fork.

30. ... Bxf5 31. Bd4 Be6 32. Bxe6 Kxe6 33. exd6 Rxf3 34. Bxh8 Rb8+ 35. Ka1 Nxd6 36. Rxd6+ Ke7 37. Rf6 Re3?

Black holds after 37. ... Rxf6!.

38. Rg7+ Kxf6 39. Rg8+ Kf7 40. Rxb8 Kg6 41. Bg7 Re2 42. a3 Rh2 43. Rb2 Rh3 44. Ka2, Black resigned. ♠

FOREIGN REPORT

BY MARK CROWTHER

3rd UzChess Cup

TASHKENT | JUNE 7-15, 2026

Masters

1st-2nd: GMs Mukhiddin Madaminov and Shamsiddin Vokhidov, 5½/9. **3rd-5th:** GMs Ian Nepomniachtchi, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, and Arjun Erigaisi, 5. **6th:** GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov, 4½. **7th-8th:** GMs Hans Moke Niemann and Nodirbek Yakubboev, 4. **9th:** GM Santosh Gujrathi Vidit, 3½. **10th:** GM Nikolas Theodorou, 3.

The bottom seed, 19-year-old GM Mukhiddin Madaminov, was a replacement for GM Javokhir Sindarov, for whom he has worked as a second. He won the very strong UzChess Cup in Tashkent after a playoff against fellow Uzbek GM Shamsiddin Vokhidov, who also wasn't one of the favorites. The UzChess Cup was founded to help prepare the Uzbekistan team for the Olympiad later this year, and consisted of three round robins and an open.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, NAJDORF VARIATION (B90)

GM Mukhiddin Madaminov (2586)
GM Ian Nepomniachtchi (2733)
3rd UzChess Cup Masters (1), Tashkent, 06.07.2026

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. a4 h6 7. Bc4 e6 8. 0-0 Nc6 9. Nxc6 bxc6 10. a5 Be7 11. Bf4 d5 12. Bd3 c5 13. exd5 exd5 14. Re1 Be6 15. Qd2 0-0 16. Bxh6 c4 17. Bxg7 cxd3 18. Bxf8 Bxf8 19. Qxd3 Bg7 20. Ra4 Qc7 21. h3



21. ... Rb8? 22. Qxa6 Rxb2 23. Qd3 Bd7 24. Raa1 d4 25. a6 Rb8 26. Ne4 Nxe4 27. Qxe4 Bc6 28. Qg4 Ra8 29. Ra3 Qd6 30. Rg3 Qf6 31. Rb1 Kh7 32. Rb6 Bh6 33. Qe2, Black resigned.

Asian Individual Championships

ULAANBAATAR | MAY 29-JUNE 6, 2026

Open

1st-4th: IM Xiangrui Kong, GM Tong Xiao, GM Zhamsaran Tsydypov, and GM Savva Vetokhin, 7/9. **5th-8th:** FM Zilong Yang, GM Yangyi Yu, GM Anand Pranav, and IM Khuong Duy Dau, 6½. 143 players.

Women

1st-2nd: IM Shri B Savitha and WGM Afruza Khamdamova, 7½/9. **3rd-8th:** IM Yuxin Song, WIM Muziyao Gao, IM Meruert Kamalidenova, IM Agrawal Vantika, WIM Zarina Nurgaliyeva, and WGM Mary Ann Gomes, 6½. 102 players.

It's been a remarkable year for young players, and that continued here: Teenage IM Xiangrui Kong from China, the 29th seed, won on tiebreak over 17-year-old GM Xiao Tong, 29-year-old GM Zhamsaran Tsydypov, and 17-year-old GM Savva Vetokhin, who all tied on 7/9. And the real headlines were grabbed by IM Roman Shogdzhiyev, the great hope for Russian chess, who scored his first GM norm at the age of 11 years, 4 months, and 1 day. He beat the previous record, held by GM Illia Nyzhnyk since 2008, by about two and a half months.

KING'S PAWN GAME (C44)

GM A.R. Ilamparthi (2525)
IM Roman Shogdzhiyev (2431)
Asian Individual Ch (6), Ulaanbaatar 06.03.2026

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. g3 Nf6 4. d3 d5 5. exd5 Nxd5 6. Bg2 Bd6 7. 0-0 0-0 8. Re1 Re8 9. a3 a5 10. Nc3 Nxc3 11. bxc3 h6 12.

Rb1 Rb8 13. Nd2 Bd7 14. Ne4 b6 15. Qh5 Re6 16. g4 Rg6 17. h3 Be7



18. Rb5?! Qf8 19. f4 exf4 20. Bxf4 Nd8 21. Rd5 Bc6 22. Bxc7? Rc8 23. Bxd8 Bxd8 24. Qf5 Bh4 25. Rf1 Bxd5 26. Qxd5 Qe7 27. Kh1 Re6 28. a4 g6 29. c4 Rd8 30. Qb5 Bf6 31. Qb1 Be5 32. Qe1 Bb8 33. Kg1 Qc7 34. Rf3 Qh2+ 35. Kf1 Be5, White resigned.

Navara - Blohberger Match

VIENNA | JUNE 8-13, 2026

23-year-old Austrian GM Felix Blohberger won a match against David Navara, 3½-2½, at the headquarters of the Austrian Chess Federation, in Vienna. Blohberger, who has his own YouTube Channel, arranged for commentary from players such as GM Alex Colovic, WGM Jennifer Shahade, and GM Simon Williams. This was a tight match with five draws; Blohberger won Game 3 in an endgame; Navara had chances in Game 1; and both players could have won the wild Game 4.

ENGLISH OPENING (A14)

GM David Navara (2639)
GM Felix Blohberger (2548)
Match (4), Vienna, 06.11.2026

1. c4 e6 2. g3 d5 3. Bg2 Nf6 4. Nf3 Be7 5. 0-0 0-0 6. b3 c5 7. Bb2 Nc6 8. e3 d4 9. exd4 cxd4 10. Re1 Re8 11. a3?! a5 12. d3 Bd6 13. Nbd2? e5 14. Ng5 h6 15. Nge4 Nxe4 16. Nxe4 Bf8 17. g4 Ne7! 18. Bc1 Ng6 19.

g5 hxg5?! 20. Qh5 Be7 21. Nxg5 Bxg5 22. Bxg5 Qd7 23. b4 Ra6 24. b5 Rae6 25. Bh3 b6 26. Re4 Bb7 27. Rae1?! Bxe4 28. Rxe4 Qd6 29. Bf5 Qxa3 30. h3!



30. ... Nf8? 31. Rh4 f6 32. Bd2? Qb2 33. Qh8+ Kf7 34. Bh6! gxh6 35. Rg4! Ke7 36. Rg8? a4? 37. Qg7+? Kd6 38. Qb7 Kc5 39. Bxe6 Rxe6? 40. Qc8+ Kb4 41. Qxf8+ Kc3 42. Qf7 a3 43. Qxe6 a2 44. Ra8 a1=Q+ 45. Rxa1 Qxa1+ 46. Kg2 Kxd3 47. c5! bxc5 48. Qa6! Qb1 49. b6+ c4 50. b7 Kd2 51. Qa8! c3 52. b8=Q c2 53. Qh8 c1=Q 54. Qxh6+ Kc3 55. Qc6+ Kb2 56. Qb5+ Ka2 57. Qd5+ Kb2 58. Qb5+ Ka2 59. Qd5+ Kb2, draw.

Vladimir Dvorkovich Memorial

AKTOBE | JUNE 3-11, 2026

1st: GM Andrew Hong, 7/9. **2nd-5th:** IM Daniyal Sapenov, GMs Daniil Dubov, Mahdi Gholami Orimi, and Denis Makhnev, 6½. 81 players.

American GM Andrew Hong went undefeated, beating GM Alexey Sarana in the last round to take clear first place in Aktoobe, Kazakhstan.

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE (E46)

GM Alexey Sarana (2668)
GM Andrew Hong (2592)
Vladimir Dvorkovich Open (9), Aktoobe, 06.11.2026

1. c4 Nf6 2. d4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e3 0-0 5. Bd2 d5 6. a3 Be7 7. Nf3 b6 8. cxd5 exd5 9. g3 a5 10. Ne5 c6 11. Qc2 Nfd7 12. Nf3 Nf6 13. Bg2 Ba6 14. Ne5 Ra7 15. f4 Nfd7 16.



Obregon, Mareco, Shankland, Fier (L to R)

Nd3 Nf6 17. 0-0 c5 18. Rfe1 cxd4 19. exd4 Nc6 20. Be3 Ng4 21. Nxd5 Nxe3 22. Rxe3 Nxd4



23. Qc3? Bf6 24. Nxf6+ gxf6 25. Rc1 Nf5 26. Rf3 Re8 27. Bf1 Nd4 28. Rf2 Re3 29. Rd1 Rc7 30. Qd2 Nf3+ 31. Rxf3 Rxf3 32. Qe2 Qd4+ 33. Kg2 Rxd3 34. Qg4+ Kf8 35. Bxd3 Bxd3 36. Kh3 Rc2 37. Qf3 Bf5+ 38. g4 Qe4 39. Qg3 h5 40. gxf5 Qxf5+ 41. Kh4 Rxxh2+, White resigned.

19th American Continental

OAXTEPEC | JUNE 2-10, 2026

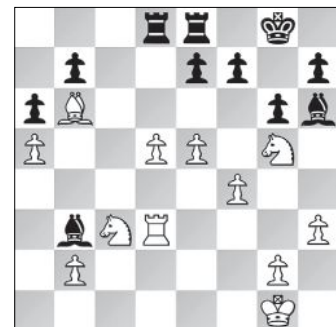
1st: GM Sam Shankland, 9½/11. **2nd-6th:** GMs Juan Carlos Obregon Rivero, Sandro Mareco, Alexandr Fier, Yago De Moura Santiago, and FM Jose Alberto Sanchez Negreiros, 8. **7th-11th:** IM Emmanuel Jimenez Garcia, GM Fernando Peralta, IM Lennis Martinez Ramirez, IM Maximillian Lu, and IM Julio Cesar Diaz Rosas, 7½. 126 players.

American GM Sam Shankland, the top seed, won his third Campeonato Panamericano-Continental. He'd previously won in Montevideo in 2018 and last year in Foz do Iguaçu in Brazil. Only GM Julio Granda has more titles (four). Shankland scored eight wins and just three draws, a point and a half clear of the field. Check out the *Chess Life Online* archives for an on-the-ground report from IM Max Lu.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, ROSSOLIMO VARIATION (B31)

GM Sam Shankland (2647)
GM Sion Galaviz Medina (2513)
19th American Continental (9), Oaxtepec, 06.08.2026

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 g6 4. 0-0 Bg7 5. c3 Nf6 6. Re1 0-0 7. d4 d5 8. e5 Ne4 9. Be3 cxd4 10. cxd4 Qb6 11. Qe2 Bd7 12. a4 a6 13. Bd3 Nb4 14. a5 Qe6 15. Bxe4 dxe4 16. Ng5 Qg4 17. Qc4 Nd3 18. Nc3 Nxe1 19. Rxe1 Bc6 20. h3 Qc8 21. d5 Bb5 22. Qxe4 Qc4 23. Qxc4 Bxc4 24. Bc5 Rfe8 25. f4 Rad8 26. Rd1 Bb3 27. Rd3 Bh6 28. Bb6



28. ... Rd7 29. Nxf7 Bxf4 30. e6 Rc7 31. Ne2 Rc1+ 32. Nxc1 Bc4 33. Rd1, Black resigned. ♖

Fair Enough

How Caïssa balances the scales of justice

BY GM ANDY SOLTIS

C

HESS IS A LOGICAL GAME, a cerebral game. But is it a completely fair game? The easy answer is “No, because

White gets to make the first move.” That’s an advantage regardless of where the pieces begin the game. If you’ve seen elite grandmasters lose as Black in 16 moves of Fischer Random/Freestyle Chess, you know what I mean.

Nevertheless, we believe Caïssa, the goddess of chess, dispenses enough justice to make it fair enough. One of her primary rules is: *When you lose, you deserve it.*

Why? Because no one loses — or wins — an error-free game. This premise means annotators often have to hunt for the mistake that mattered.

KING’S INDIAN ATTACK (A07)

GM Alexander Grischuk (2780)

GM Wang Yue (2705)

Beijing (7), 07.11.2013

1. Nf3 d5 2. g3 Nf6 3. Bg2 c6 4. O-O g6 5. d3 Bg7 6. Nbd2 O-O 7. e4 a5 8. a4



Computers rate White’s position slightly superior after the leading candidate moves, such as 8. ... Bg4, 8. ... c5, 8. ... e6 and 8. ... Nbd7.

8. ... Bg4 9. e5 Nfd7 10. d4 c5 11. h3 Bxf3 12. Nxf3 cxd4 13. e6!? fxe6 14. Nxd4 Nc5 15. Re1 Ra6 16. c3 Nbd7 17. Be3 Kh8 18. Nb5 Qc8 19. Rc1 Rd8 20. b4!

White went on to win a long endgame.

The main comment in *New in Chess* was criticism of 8. ... Bg4. “A suspect move,” GM Anish Giri wrote. “Why? Because there must have been some mistake in this game!”

In other words, if Black lost there had to be a faulty move that warranted punishment. No move after 8. ... Bg4 seemed to be a guiltier culprit.

Another tenet of our sense of justice says that the result of a game should conform to an objective evaluation of the critical positions.

When you blunder in an even position and lose, it’s natural to feel chess is unfair. A fair-minded opponent may even agree with you.

‘RIDICULOUS’

GM Viswanathan Anand (2775)

GM Michael Adams (2710)

London Chess Classic (6), 12.07.2012



WHITE TO MOVE

The position is roughly balanced. For ex-

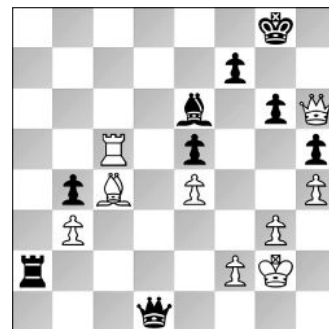
ample, 41. Rxe5 allows Black enough counterplay with 41. ... Qd2! when he should not lose the rook endgame after 42. Qxd2 Rxd2 43. Bc4 Bxc4 44. bxc4 Rd4.

White tried to keep his winning hopes alive with 41. Bc4. After 41. ... Bxc4 42. Rxc4, he might win the b4-pawn or create mating threats on the last rank with 42. ... Qd1 43. Qh6.

The drawback to 41. Bc4 was the immediate 41. ... Qd1.

Then Black can meet 42. Bxe6 with a winning 42. ... Ra1!. If 43. Bxf7+ Kg7.

Therefore, White tried 42. Qh6.



Imagine that this is a Black-to-play-and-win quiz position. A master would probably find the answer in seconds.

Yet Black, one of the world’s elite GMs, admitted he spent “a long time” before he played 42. ... Bh3+!.

Was he savoring the experience of checkmating the reigning world champion? (Anand resigned immediately in view of 43. Kxh3 Qh1 mate.)

No, Michael Adams explained. He said he took his time before playing 42. ... Bh3+ “because it seemed so unjust.”

He found it “ridiculous” that a natural-looking move like 41. Bc4 can be a game-losing blunder.

Our sense of justice is rarely mentioned

QUIZ FOR AUGUST

ELEVEN OF THE TOP 14 players in the top section of this year's thrilling Tata Steel round robin in Wijk aan Zee were under 27. Eight were 22 or younger, including winner GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov, 21.

Your task is to find the fastest winning line of play in these five positions from the top section and one from the Challengers section. This will usually mean spotting the forced win of a decisive amount of material, such as a minor piece. Solutions on page 63.

PROBLEM 1
GM Arjun Erigaisi
GM Praggnanandhaa R



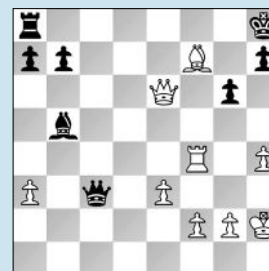
WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 2
GM Matthias Bluebaum
GM Anish Giri



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 3
GM Yagiz Erdogmus
GM Anish Giri



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 4
GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov
GM Anish Giri



BLACK TO MOVE

PROBLEM 5
GM Max Warmerdam
GM Marc-Andria Maurizzi



WHITE TO MOVE

PROBLEM 6
GM Matthias Bluebaum
GM Javokhir Sindarov



BLACK TO MOVE

in chess literature. But Emanuel Lasker, the philosophical world champion, devoted a chapter to it in *Lasker's Manual of Chess*.

He drew a contrast:

On the one hand, there is the unfairness you encounter in everyday living, where people go unpunished for misbehavior.

On the other is the fairness of chess, he said.

"On the Chess-board, lies and hypocrisy do not survive long," Lasker wrote in one of his most famous lines.

By showing us that justice exists at least somewhere in the world, we recover our "courage and vitality to play the game of Life," he added.

Lasker's world-class colleague Ossip Bernstein took a different view: Your result in a tournament may seem unfair, Bernstein said.

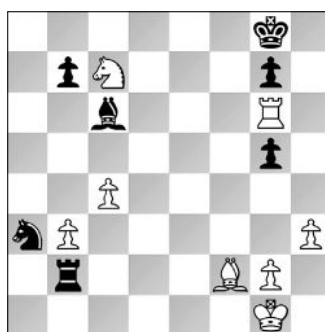
But in the long run, wrongful results tend to even out. The undeserved losses are offset by the "equalizing injustice" of undeserved victories.

Experienced players know how "equalizing" can apply to a single game. When a blunder changes the proper course of the game, a counter-blunder often returns justice to the board.

Here's a recent case:

BLUNDER BATTLE

GM Yagiz Erdogmus (2658)
GM Jorden van Foreest (2703)
Wijk aan Zee (6), 01.23.2026



BLACK TO MOVE

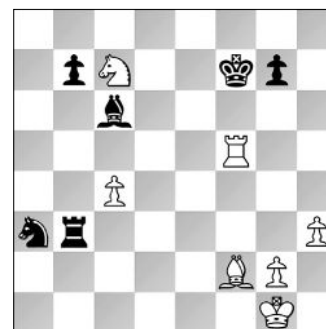
A draw would be a likely result after 37. ... Rb1+ and 38. ... Kf7. But Black played the immediate **37. ... Kf7??**.

This allows a trick — 38. Rxg7+! Kxg7 39. Bd4+ and 40. Bxb2.

Two extra pawns is a big difference from one extra pawn. White would be a heavy

favorite to win.

Yet he counter-blundered with **38. Rxg5??**. He had only a small plus after **38. ... Rxb3**. Justice was restored ... until **39. Rf5+**:



Black made the third blunder in the course of five moves: **39. ... Ke7??** instead of 39. ... Kg6.

White replied **40. Bc5+** and Black found himself in a mating net after **40. ... Kd8 41. Ne6+ Kd7? 42. Nd4 Rb1+ 43. Kh2 Nxc4 44. Rf7+ Kd8 45. Ne6+ Kc8 46. Ba7!**.

To stop 47. Rc7 mate, Black could lose a piece with 46. ... Bd7 47. Rf8+ Be8 48. Rxe8+. Instead, he resigned.

Was that a fair result? Caissa would say, "Fair enough." ♦

World Class

Endgames from the Candidates tournaments

BY IM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN

IN THE LAST TWO COLUMNS we looked at some memorable moments from the 2026 Candidates and Women's Candidates tournaments, but the two tournaments also produced enough instructive endgames to fill up my columns for the rest of the year. We will kick off this series on endgames from the Candidates tournaments with some rook endgames. First, let's look at two games with four versus three pawns, where the extra pawn is a distant passed pawn.

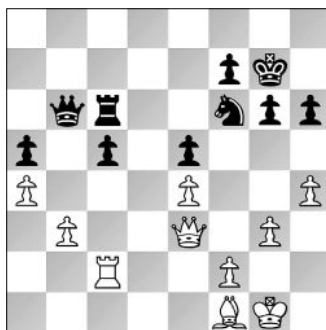
4 versus 3 Rook Endgames

DRAWING SMOOTHLY

GM Andrey Esipenko (2698)

GM Hikaru Nakamura (2810)

Candidates Tournament (2), Cyprus, 03.30.2026



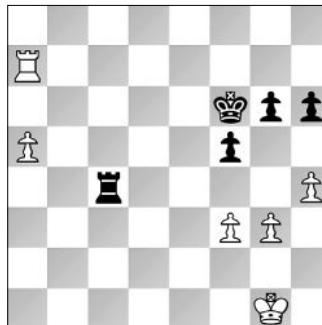
BLACK TO MOVE

31. ... c4!?

Black has many moves here, but Hikaru decides to give up a pawn and enter a four versus three rook endgame.

Black could also play 31. ... Rd6 with the idea of putting the rook on d4. White can go for the forcing line 32. Qxc5 but doesn't have to (32. Kg2 Rd4 33. f3 and the game continues). It's equal after 32. ... Qxb3 33. Qxd6 Qxc2 34. Qxe5 Qxa4 35. Qc3 Qxe4 36. Qxa5.

32. Qxb6 Rxb6 33. Bxc4 Nxe4 34. Re2 f5 35. f3 Nd6 36. Rxe5 Nxc4 37. bxc4 Rb4 38. Rxa5 Rxc4 39. Ra7+ Kf6 40. a5



The key position. This endgame should end in a draw because the white rook is poorly placed in front of the pawn and Black has enough counterplay on the kingside to make up for the pawn deficiency, as we will see in the game. But it's not that easy.

40. ... Rc3

I have shown this endgame to many of my students and almost everyone's instinct was to cut off the king on the second rank with 40. ... Rc2??. As natural as this move feels, unfortunately it is a big mistake. The concept is somewhat similar to the endgame between GM Christopher Yoo and Daniel Yang from the National Open, which I annotated on page 33.

The black rook should either attack the kingside pawns or maintain contact with the a-pawn, and not allow the white rook to improve. It's a win for White after 41.

Ra6+ Kg7 42. Rb6 or any safe move along the sixth rank, improving the rook by moving it from in front of the pawn to the side. This frees the white rook and ties down the black king to the defense of the pawns. The black rook also isn't so free to move, because the a-pawn is close to promoting. After 42. ... Ra2 43. a6 Kf7 44. Kf1 White will run the king over to the queenside, and there are two paths to victory, depending on whether Black tries to grab pawns on the kingside or waits:

(a) 44. ... Ra3 45. Ke2 Ra2+ 46. Kd3 Ra3+ 47. Kc4 Rxf3 48. Rb3 Rf2 49. Ra3 Rc2+ 50. Kb5 Rc8 51. a7 Ra8 52. Kb6.

(b) 44. ... Kg7 45. Ke1 Kf7 46. Kd1 Kg7 47. Kc1 Kf7 48. Kb1 Ra3 49. Kb2 Ra5 (49. ... Rxf3 50. a7 wins) 50. Kb3 Kg7 51. Kb4 Ra1 52. Kb5 and the king runs to b7, escorting the pawn to promotion.

All that said, putting the rook behind the pawn immediately with 40. ... Ra4 was also perfectly playable. After 41. a6 h5 42. Ra8 Black should go 42. ... Kg7 so that the pawn push to a7 doesn't come with the threat of Ra8-f8+. Now 43. a7 is a draw immediately. Black can either wait with the rook on the a-file or with the king between g7 and h7. Once the white king runs over to b6 to defend the pawn, Black will check, separate the king and the pawn, and put the rook back behind the a-pawn. White can run with the king before pushing with 43. Kf2, but Black finds quick counterplay with 43. ... f4!. After 44. gxf4 Rxf4 45. Kg3 Ra4 the black rook will stay on the fourth rank attacking the pawn, and the king will go back and forth between g7 and h7. If White pushes the pawn to a7, it's an immediate draw; if the white king starts running to the queenside, then Black will have enough time to capture the h4-pawn and get counterplay.

41. Kf2 Rc2+ 42. Ke3 Rc3+ 43. Ke2 Rc2+

44. Kd3 Rg2

Hikaru goes for the most direct counterplay.

45. Ra6+ Kf7 46. Kd4 Rxf3 47. Ke5 Rxf3 48. Ra7+ Ke8 49. a6

If 49. Kf6 f4 50. Kxg6 Rg3+ (a) stepping on the f-file is still a draw after 51. Kf5 f3 52. Ke4 f2 53. Ra8+ Kf7 54. Ra7+ Kg8 55. Ra8+ Kh7 56. Rf8 Ra3 57. Rxf2 Rxa5, but (b) White shouldn't get carried away with 51. Kxh6 f3 when suddenly the pawn is unstoppable — 52. Ra8+ Ke7 53. Ra7+ Kf6 54. Ra8 Rg6+ 55. Kh5 Rg7 and the pawn promotes: 56. Rb8 f2 57. Rb1 Rg1 or 56. Rf8+ Rf7.

49. ... Ra3 50. Ke6 Kd8 51. Kf6

Here the players shook hands. Let's see why, and how the game could have continued:

51. ... f4 52. Kxg6 f3 53. Kxh6 Ke8

Threatening to push, so the white rook has to hurry back to stop the pawn.

54. Rb7 f2 55. Rb1 Rxa6+ 56. Kg5 Kf7 57.

Rf1 Rf6 58. h5 Kg7 59. h6+ Rxh6 60. Rxf2

Down to bare rooks.

Hikaru was confident enough in his end-game skills that he willingly entered a pawn-down rook endgame. GMs Katerina Lagno and Tan Zhongyi had a similar dynamic in their game.

EVEN EVENER

GM Kateryna Lagno (2508)

GM Tan Zhongyi (2535)

Women's Candidates Tournament (10), Cyprus, 04.09.2026



BLACK TO MOVE

This is an even better version for Black; unlike in the previous example, there are no weak pawns for the black king to defend on the sixth rank.

32. ... Rb2

Cutting the king off on the second rank is



one of many ways for Black to continue. Unlike in the Hikaru game, it is not as urgent for Black to make contact with the white pawn, as it is not very far advanced and the black king won't get cut off on the sixth rank. In the previous example, Black also had weak pawns he had to defend with the king, which limited his mobility.

33. h4

Improving the rook isn't as effective here: 33. Rc6 Ra2 34. Rc4 Kf7 and the black rook is attacking all the pawns on the second rank, which means the white king cannot activate.

33. ... h5

A useful move, grabbing some space on the kingside and giving the king the h7-square.

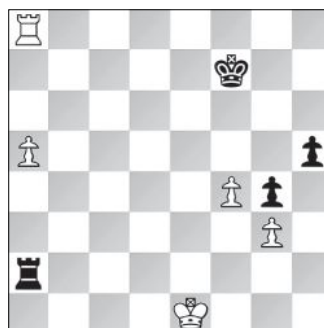
34. a5 Ra2

Putting the rook behind the moving passed pawn is an automatic decision.

35. Ra8+ Kf7 36. g3 g5

Tan chooses to force matters. Black could also choose from a number of waiting moves, such as 36. ... Kg6.

37. hxf5 fxf5 38. f3 g4 39. f4



39. ... h4

This is very concrete, but Tan had it all worked out. Attacking the g3-pawn and waiting with the king was another path to drawing, similar to the analysis we saw above: 39. ... Ra3 40. Kf2 Kg7 41. a6 Kh7.

40. gxf4 g3 41. Kf1 Rf2+ 42. Kg1 Rxf4

As more pawns get traded, we get closer to a draw.

43. h5 Ra4 44. Ra7+ Kg8 45. Kg2 Ra3 46. Kh3 Kh8 47. h6 Kg8 48. Rg7+ Kh8 49. Rg5 Kh7 50. Rh5 Rb3

The rook stays on the third rank, defending the pawn. Of course Black avoids 50. ... Kg6?? 51. h7.

51. Kg2 Ra3 52. Kh3 Rb3 53. Rg5 Ra3, draw.

Compared to Hikaru's game, Tan's defensive task was easier, and she held the endgame with ease.

Rooks on 7th Rank

Both games between Nakamura and GM Fabiano Caruana were decided in the endgame. Caruana took the first one, but in the second, Nakamura's rooks on the seventh rank proved too powerful.

CRASHING THROUGH

GM Hikaru Nakamura (2810)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2795)

Candidates Tournament (8), Cyprus, 04.07.2026



BLACK TO MOVE

The position is easier to play for White, as he is controlling one of the open files. From d6, the rook will attack two of Black's pawns. Black's a6-rook is awkwardly placed, as the rooks are not connected and cannot challenge White's active rooks.

24. ... Rb8!

Activating the rook is more important than hanging onto the e6-pawn: 24. ... Re8 is too passive and will leave Black with two bad rooks after 25. Rb1, when White is simply controlling both open files and is threatening to double the rooks on the seventh rank.

25. Rxe6 Rb2

The next step in controlling an open file is to get the rook to the seventh rank, which is what Nakamura does.

26. Re7

After 26. Rd1 Ra7 Black will give up another pawn but will protect the seventh rank. After 27. Rxc6 Rxa2 28. c5 Rc2 Black would be quite happy with his piece arrangement, as the a7-rook is now behind a passed pawn.

26. ... Rab6 27. Ra7 Rxa2 28. h3

White wants to play Rd1-d7 but has to take care of back-rank issues first.



28. ... h5?

In time pressure, Caruana makes a big mistake. He must have been concerned about his own back rank, as Rf1-d1 is coming, but he had a better defense. Abandoning the a-pawn with 28. ... Rab2 isn't an easy decision, but it's crucial for Black to double on the b-file to prevent White from doubling on the seventh rank. Now 29. Rd1 can be met with 29. ... Rb1 30. Rxb1 Rxb1+ 31. Kh2 Rcl 32. Rxa5 Rxc4 with a probable draw.

29. Rd1

White will now double on the seventh rank. Black has the same idea, but White is faster.

29. ... Rbb2 30. Rd8+ Kh7 31. Rdd7 Rxf2 32. Rxc7+ Kh8

32. ... Kh6 runs into a mating net after 33. h4, when the only way to save the king is to give up another pawn and let White create another passed pawn: 33. ... f5 34. e5 f4 35. Rh7+ Kg6 36. Rag7+ Kf5 37. Rxh5+ Ke4 38. e6 wins.

33. Rh7+ Kg8 34. Rag7+

34. Rhb7 isn't quite checkmate: Black can defend with 34. ... Rxc7+ 35. Kf1 Kh8! and the rook can block the back rank check with ... Rg2-g8.

34. ... Kf8 35. Rf7+ Kg8

After 35. ... Ke8 comes 36. Rb7 threatening checkmate from both b8 and h8, and Black doesn't have a perpetual: 36. ... Rxc7+ 37. Kf1 Raf2+ 38. Ke1 Re2+ 39. Kd1 Rd2+ 40. Kc1 Rc2+ 41. Kb1.

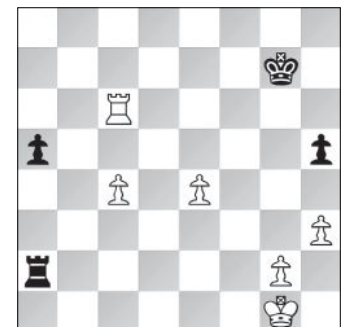
36. Rhg7+ Kh8

The fact that the king has to stay in this box is bad news for Black.

37. Rg6

The pawn is attacked, but the bigger threat is e4-e5, taking advantage of the pin.

37. ... Rf4 38. Rxf6 Rxf6 39. Rxf6 Kg7 40. Rxc6



Nakamura is now up two pawns and went on to convert his advantage seamlessly.

40. ... Rc2 41. Rc5 Kg6 42. Rxa5 Rxc4 43. Re5 h4 44. Kf2 Rc2+ 45. Kf3 Rc3+ 46. Kg4 Rg3+ 47. Kxh4 Rxc2 48. Rf5 Rg1 49. Rf4 Ra1 50. Kg3 Rg1+ 51. Kf3 Rf1+ 52. Ke3 Re1+ 53. Kd4 Ra1 54. Rf5 Rh1 55. Rf3 Ra1 56. h4 Ra4+ 57. Ke5 Ra5+ 58. Kf4 Rh5 59. Kg4 Re5 60. Rf4 Kh6 61. Kf3 Kg6 62. Ke3 Ra5 63. Rg4+ Kf6 64. Rg5 Ra1 65. Rf5+ Kg6 66. h5+ Kh6 67. e5, Black resigned.

Rook activity and cutting off your opponent's king are often more important in the endgame than winning a pawn. In fact, giving up a pawn to ensure your own king is activated and your rooks don't stay passive is a well-known endgame concept.

Next month we will dive deeply into the Round 12 game between GMs Anna Muzychuk and Aleksandra Goryachkina. I was planning on including the game in this column, but as I kept analyzing, I realized how complicated the endgame was and that it deserved a full column dedicated to it. ♠

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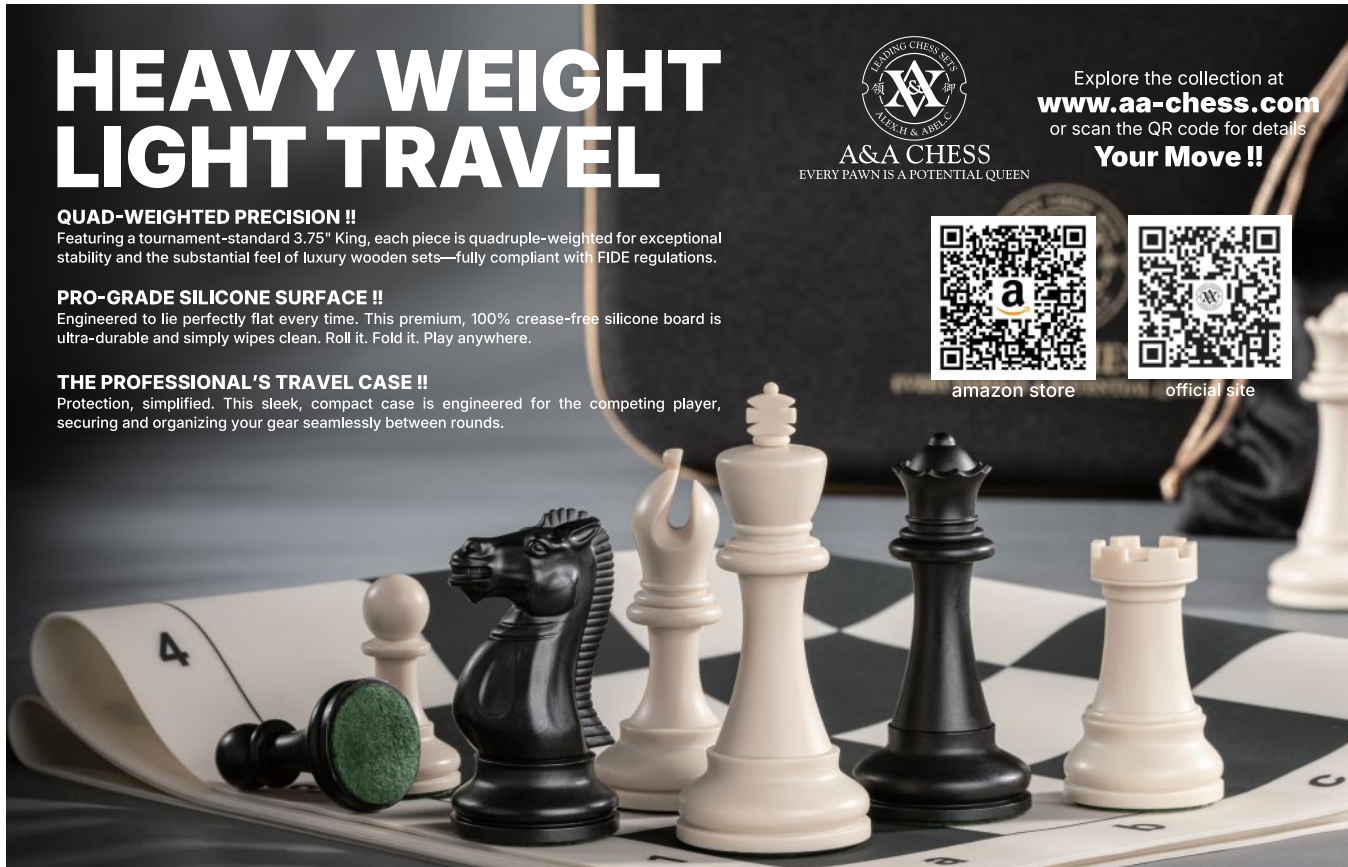
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Team Works

Four high schoolers' consistent play wins the USATE.

BY RICK MASSIMO

F

OR AN AMATEUR TOURNAMENT with no cash prizes, the U.S. Amateur Team East draws a whole lot of big-money play-

ers to New Jersey every Presidents' Day weekend: Repeat Grand Prix champion GM Jianchao Zhou, three-time U.S. Champion GM Joel Benjamin, and GM Awonder Liang were just three of 15 grandmasters to make the trip to play for plaques and clocks.

But in the end, the trend of young teams winning the tournament continued as a high school team won the whole shebang: Thomas Jefferson Checks and Balances, representing Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, in Alexandria, Virginia, won the title on tiebreak over four other teams (BMore Bandits, Check Republic, Crouching Tigers, and Magnus Carlsen has Great Jeans) atop the 336-team field.

Checks and Balances wasn't the highest-rated team in the field; they featured no grandmasters, and they didn't win any board prizes either. But FMs Kent Slate and Kyle Zhuang, along with Kevin Su and Aarush

Gupta, each scored either 4 or 4½ out of 6 over the weekend, and that put them in the top group.

Checks and Balances competed together on the TJ chess team: "We were already good friends before the tournament," Zhuang says. But when the time came to pick a team to go to New Jersey, there wasn't a lot of competition: There was a weekend-long tournament in Virginia, Zhuang says, and most of the players from their school played there instead.

Not Slate, Zhuang, Su, or Gupta: "I personally I thought that coming to the Amateur Teams would be a great experience because I've never participated in a team tournament like this," Zhuang said. "And I've seen past issues of *Chess Life*, and it seems pretty cool."

Was it?

"The atmosphere, yeah. What was really special was that some of the teams had certain themes to them. I remember for one of the rounds, one team came out in a pickle costume and did some kind of skit, and I thought that was really entertaining."

Down to the Wire

Zhuang said the plan was to pile up the game points for tiebreaks, but it didn't really work: "We got off to a bad start," he remembered; they lost the first game to finish in their tournament. Still, they managed to win their first four matches. Slate had more trouble in the first round than he probably bargained for, but he came through:

FRENCH DEFENSE (C07)

FM Kent Slate (2336)

Mark Kogan (2118)

USATE (1), Parsippany, 02.14.2026

Annotations by FM Kent Slate

1. e4

Our team arrived at the hotel in a scramble, filtering in one by one and searching through the noise for each other. With a team average of 2183 out of a maximum 2200, we expected to coast through the early rounds. However,



The winners: Thomas Jefferson Checks and Balances

PHOTO: COURTESY STEPHEN LORIMOR

we were given anything but easy pairings, as for our first round, we were matched against Keep It In Check, rated 1955. We learned our pairing just minutes before the round, so our only preparation was motivating each other to build confidence that we could work it out at the board. With (in all likelihood) neither of us having done any prep, I shelved the suspicion and fell back on my main repertoire. 1. e4 it was!

1. ... e6 2. d4 d5

I was rather disappointed to see the French, as most of the main lines lead to complex and incredibly sharp situations where a deficiency in preparation can prove lethal.

3. Nd2

With this in mind, I eventually opted for the Tarrasch, which is generally considered the more positional and “safe” option while still offering more flair for ambition than the Exchange.

3. ... c5 4. Ngf3

Keeping the central tension.

4. ... cxd4 5. Nxd4 Nc6 6. Bb5 Bd7 7. Nxc6 bxc6 8. Bd3 Bd6 9. Qe2 e5 10. 0-0

Up till this point, I had been vaguely following my old preparation. I knew the queen belonged on e2 and the bishop on d3, and I was aware the knight would sometimes want to plant itself on c4 or on f3. Still, the specifics were fuzzy, so I settled on making an indisputably improving move. But castling is not the main move here, for reasons we’ll see.

10. ... Ne7 11. c4 d4 12. f4!?



I eventually opted for this after about a 20-minute think. I recognized that it was probably not the best move because of 12. ... c5!, which solidifies the central pawns. But I would argue that it was a good practical decision. I was already out of book, while my opponent had blitzed every move up to this point, so it was logical to play something

offbeat to disrupt his theory. Additionally, Black cannot stop me from closing the position with f4-f5, which keeps more pieces on the board, and the situation less obvious. Complications were good, since, as Board 1 with white against a lower-rated opponent, I needed to win. I also spotted some b2-b4 ideas, crashing open the center, which I thought looked especially tricky. Perhaps most importantly, the obvious “refutation” of this move — my opponent going up the Exchange — was a line I evaluated as chiefly in my favor!

I was familiar with the idea of c2-c4 to coax ... d5-d4, weakening the light squares, then sacrificing the c-pawn with c4-c5. However, as I had castled, I had given Black an additional tempo to include ... Ng8-e7. So after 12. c5 Bxc5 13. Nc4?! I realized Black can play 13. ... Ng6!, when the e5-pawn is comfortably defended and the knight on g6 is an excellent piece.

I spent a lot of time looking for alternative options, including the interesting (and technically best!) continuation, 13. Qh5! Ng6 14. f4! Qe7, but I eventually discarded this option as I missed the strong 15. g3 at the end holding everything together. White is down a pawn but is very active, and is preparing to exert further pressure on the center. (I had calculated 15. f5!? Nf4 16. Rxf4 exf4 with an unclear and unbalanced position. But I thought I could do better with the game move!)

12. ... Ng6?

The move I was hoping for!

13. f5! Nf4 14. Rxf4! exf4 15. e5

There is nothing concrete quite yet, but White is breaking through with the central pawns and will soon be able to deploy pieces to beautiful supporting squares.

15. ... Bc7 16. Nf3 0-0 17. Qe4 f6

Forcing the central junction forward, but allowing me to dominate the light squares.

18. e6 Re8



19. c5!

A purely positional concept, and a moment I am incredibly proud of! I am in no rush to take on f4, and this shuts down any possibility of Black activating their light-squared bishop in the near future — it will remain stuck behind the c6-pawn.

19. ... g5!?

The engine scoffs at this move, but I thought this was an incredibly good practical decision. It throws a wrench in my easy plan to dominate the light squares and slowly improve after Bc1xf4.

20. Nxd4?

Too slow. The d4-pawn posed little threat to me; I could’ve dealt with it later. The engine suggests 20. h4!, and I am crashing through after 20. ... h6 21. Bd2 Bc8 22. hxc5 hxc5 23. g3! fxg3 24. Qg4, but this is not easy to foresee.

20. ... Re7!

Black wants to activate the light-squared Bishop via e8 and h5.

21. Bc4 Be8 22. Bd2 Be5 23. Bc3 Qc7 24. Rd1 Rd8



All my pieces are developed; what next? Black has secured the f4-pawn and activated his light-squared bishop, so there are no glaring weaknesses to target. I identified the dark-squared bishop trade as my main strategic goal — eliminating his counterplay on that color complex — but forcing that exchange without conceding something in return wasn’t straightforward. I figured a safe way to start would be a consolidating approach.

25. Rd3

This and my next move are intended to tidy up a bit before committing to expansion. Only then might I consider advancing with b2-b4 on the queenside and, once the position allowed, engineering the dark-squared bishop trade under safer circumstances.



FM Kent Slate

25. ... g4!?

A double-edged move, and one I initially believed to be a blessing in disguise. The position is basically closed with no obvious weaknesses, so had my opponent simply done nothing things may well have been more difficult for me. And yet, while this advance does weaken f4, Black was seeking active counterplay, looking to create a pawn break and liberate his pieces as quickly as possible. As the game demonstrated, the complications resulting from this ambitious move became incredibly tricky to navigate.

I expected 25. ... a5, stopping any queen-side expansion. After 26. Kf1 Kg7 it's a slower game.

26. Kf1 h5 27. b3 Kh8?!

After 27. ... Kh7! the king is more active, and off the dark-squared bishop's diagonal.

28. Ne2?

The wrong execution of the right plan.

I missed the incredibly strong, multi-purpose move 28. Qe1!, threatening Bc3-a5 and preparing to recapture on c3, all while discouraging ... h5-h4. After 28. ... Qb7 29. Nc2! Bxc3 30. Qxc3 it's the same trade, but Black cannot defend the f6-pawn in time! If 30. ... Rxd3 31. Qxf6+! is a *zwischenzug* and an illustration of why Black's king would be better off on h7. Now 31. ... Kg8 32. Bxd3 wins.

28. ... Bxc3?

Playing into my hands. The right move was 28. ... Rxd3!, because after 29. Qxd3 h4 with the queen no longer on e4, I can't trade the

dark-squared bishops on my terms, and now Black's kingside expansion suddenly makes sense.

29. Nxc3 Rxd3 30. Bxd3 f3! 31. g3!

Giving Black the protected passed pawn, but the position must remain closed.

31. ... Qd8 32. Qe3?!

It was critical to activate my king as soon as possible, so it can assist in an endgame. White's winning after 32. Kf2! Rh7 33. Ke3! h4 34. Qxg4, as the king on e3 defends the bishop.

32. ... Kg7?

A missed opportunity: 32. ... Rh7!, preparing ... h5-h4, would have been tough to meet here.

33. Ne4

Preparing a tricky idea (or so I thought!).

33. ... Qd5**34. Nc3**

I had to stomach the fact that I couldn't play 34. Nxf6?? here. On the surface, it looks like it wins on the spot. My idea was 34. ... Kxf6 35. Qh6+ Ke5?? 36. Qh8+! with the beautiful 36. ... Rg7 37. Qxg7 mate.

But Black has the gorgeous intermezzo 35. ... Bg6!!, which disrupts my geometry. After 36. Qxg6+ Ke5 there's no mate, and in fact I would have to find a long and difficult sequence of forcing moves for equality. My opponent admitted after the game that he missed that concept and thought 34. Nxf6 was game over. But better safe than sorry!

34. ... Qe5??

Because my opponent didn't see the above resource, and was likely spooked by the idea of 34. ... Qd8 35. Ne4 repeating the same concept, he resorted to a nuclear solution. But even down the Exchange, the connected passed pawns combined with the total domination of my knight and bishop on the light squares proves to be simply too much.

The actual win after 34. ... Qd8 comes with 35. Kf2! h4 36. Bc4, when Black's light-squared bishop is thoroughly trapped and his queen has no immediate infiltration squares. Slow, improving moves should prove decisive for White.

35. Qxe5 fxe5 36. Ne4! Kh6 37. Bc4

Preparing f5-f6.

37. ... Bg6

My connected passers are too strong, so Black concedes a full piece.

38. fxg6 Kxg6 39. b4!

Creating a queenside passed pawn proves decisive. With the pawn on e6 acting as a constant thorn in Black's side, he simply cannot address everything at once.

39. ... Kf5 40. Nd6+ Kf6 41. Kf2

Black's rook is helpless without open files.

41. ... Rh7 42. a4 a6 43. Ne4+ Kf5 44. Ke3 Re7 45. Nd6+ Kf6 46. Nc8 Re8 47. Na7 a5 48. bxa5 e4 49. Nxc6 Rc8 50. e7 h4 51. a6 hxg3 52. hxg3 Rh8 53. a7 Ra8 54. Bd5 Kg7 55. Nd8, Black resigned.

It was a valiant fight after the Exchange sacrifice, and credit where it is due: My young opponent made it incredibly difficult to execute my plans at every turn. But in the end, he didn't seize his chances to create counterplay and activate his pieces, so his position remained passive, and after a few concessions he was squeezed with no way to untangle.

Zhuang's draw in Round 4 was a wild one:

CARO-KANN DEFENSE (B11)

FM Kyle Zhuang (2283)

Roshan Idnani (2220)

USATE (4), Parsippany, 02.15.2026

Annotations by FM Kyle Zhuang

This was probably the craziest game I've ever played over the board.

1. e4 c6 2. Nc3 d5 3. Nf3 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Nf6 5. Qe2 Bf5 6. d3 Bxe4

I didn't really like his decision of handing me the bishop pair for no reason, but it worked out fine in the game.

7. dxe4 e5 8. g3

Of course not 8. Nxe5?? Qa5+.

8. ... Nbd7 9. Bg2 Bc5 10. 0-0 0-0 11. b3 Re8 12. Bb2 Qc7 13. h3 Rad8 14. Rad1 Bd6 15. Rfe1 Nc5 16. Nh2 Ne6



Here I didn't really like my position, but I had faith that my two bishops would eventually become active and generate counterplay.

17. Ng4 Nxe4 18. Qxe4 Bc5 19. c3

I temporarily stop any pieces from going to d4, but I block in my bishop and am forced to reposition it.

19. ... a5 20. Bc1 b5 21. Bf1

It looks bad to bring both bishops back to their starting squares, but my c1-bishop has an open diagonal, and the f1-bishop can transfer to c4 whenever Black plays ... b5-b4.

21. ... g6 22. h4 Qa7 23. Qf3 b4 24. Bb2 bxc3 25. Bxc3 Nd4 26. Qg2

In hindsight, I should have taken the knight and accepted the worse side of an opposite-colored bishop middlegame, as it would likely have ended in a draw.

26. ... Rd6 27. Bc4 Rf6

But now my opponent starts to go wrong.

28. Rf1 Kh8

I had no idea what his intention was with this move; it just walks into more trouble along the a1-h8 diagonal.

29. Kh1 Rd6 30. f4 f6 31. Rd3 Bb6 32. Qd2 c5 33. Kg2 Kg7 34. h5 Qb7

I had completely overlooked this move, and now I thought I was losing.

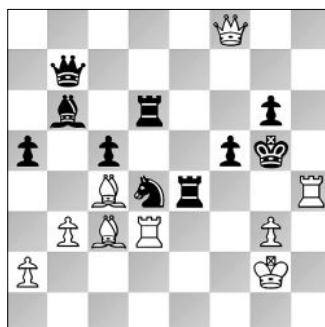
35. Qe3 exf4 36. Rxf4 f5

Luckily for me, my opponent missed 36. ... g5!, trapping my rook on f4. Best play for White is an absurd computer line that goes 37. h6+ Kxh6 38. Qf3, sacrificing the queen out of nowhere, but Black's still better.

37. hxe6 hxe6 38. Rh4 Rxe4

Now the fun starts.

39. Qh6+ Kf6 40. Qf8+ Kg5



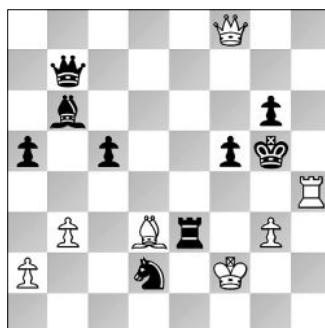
41. Bd2+

This works, but the quiet move 41. Kf1, hiding from the black queen, was a lot simpler.

41. ... Re3+ 42. Kg1

Here 42. Bd5 also wins. The key idea is that after the queen takes, my rook sees the queen after the knight gives a check. A sample line goes 42. ... Qxd5+ 43. Kg1 Nf3+ 44. Kf2, and Roshan has to sacrifice the queen after 44. ... Qxd3 45. Bxe3+ (or 44. ... Nxd2 45. Rxd5).

42. ... Nf3+ 43. Kf2 Rxd3 44. Bxd3?? Nxd2??



The computer says it's even after 44. ... Nxh4 45. Bxe3+ Kg4 46. Be2+ Kh3 47. gxh4 c4!.

45. Kxe3

Here I missed an insane mating combination with 45. Rh5+!! and Black gets mated no matter what: 45. ... gxh5 46. Qxf5+; 45. ... Kxh5 46. Qh8+ or 45. ... Kg4 46. Bxf5+ Kxh5 47. Bg4+ Kxg4 48. Qf4+ and 49. Qh4 mate.

45. ... c4+ 46. Kxd2 cxd3 47. Qh6+ Kf6 48. Qf8+, draw.

By now Kent and Aarush had won, so I was happy to make a draw to win the match.

Months later, Zhuang still recalls, "I never want to do that again!"

The key match for Checks and Balances came in the penultimate Round 5 against perhaps the most stacked team in the tournament: UChicago Goes East, led by GM Awonder Liang and featuring GM Pravneen Balakrishnan (a Thomas Jefferson graduate), IM Kapil Chandran, and 144-rated Alex Gordon. (The rule requiring Board 4 to be within 1,000 rating points of Board 1 only applies to teams getting under the 2200 barrier; UChicago's average rating put them in line for the Under 2000 prize.)

No matter; While Liang downed Slate on Board 1, Zhuang held Balakrishnan to a draw, while Kevin Su on Board 3 came through against Chandran:

DUTCH DEFENSE (A42)

IM Kapil Chandran (2449)

Kevin Su (2232)

USATE (5), Parsippany, 02.16.2026

Annotations by Kevin Su

1. d4 d6 2. Nf3 g6 3. c4 Bg7 4. Nc3 f5?!

An odd move order to reach the Dutch Defense, but I felt that the King's Indian wasn't the best choice against an opponent much higher rated than me.

5. e4!

Taking advantage of Black's knight not yet being developed.

5. ... Nf6 6. Bd3 0-0 7. exf5 gxf5 8. d5?!

The idea is to mitigate the ... e7-e5 idea by taking *en passant*, but it was better to prevent it altogether with 8. 0-0 Nc6 9. Re1 e6 10. h3 Re8 11. d5.

8. ... e5 9. dxe6 e.p. Bxe6 10. Nd4 Qd7 11. 0-0 Nc6 12. Nxe6 Qxe6 13. Re1 Qd7 14. Bg5 Ng4 15. Qd2?!

Black's knight becomes a problem from g4,

and it was better to chase it away with 15. h3 Nge5 16. f4 Nxd3 17. Qxd3 Rae8 18. Nd5. White has a superior pawn structure and slightly more space, so he shouldn't be too worried about losing the bishop pair.

15. ... Bd4!

Although Stockfish is largely indifferent between this and a host of other moves, I think this maneuver to put pressure on the kingside was practically very effective.

16. Bh4 Qg7 17. Nd5 Rf7

Perhaps realizing something had gone amiss out of the opening, my opponent took a long think here.

18. Bf1?

I can only speculate what White's idea was. Perhaps he intended to overprotect the g2-pawn before the upcoming attack, but this turns out not to be too useful, since h2 and f2 are the main targets of Black's dark-squared bishop.

The stronger prophylactic move was 18. Kh1, stopping any ideas of ... Nc6-e5-f3+ or ... Bd4xf2+. White's OK after 18. ... f4 19. Re4 Qh6 20. Bg3!.



18. ... f4!

Because of all the forcing threats in this position, I found it relatively easy to calculate a concrete winning line. On the other hand, my opponent had to consider a variety of Black's attacking options and find defensive resources for each, which certainly put a strain on his clock.

19. Re4 Qh6

The obvious move, and good enough for a significant advantage, but it would be remiss of me to not mention 19. ... Raf8, the top engine line. The idea is to prevent Nd5-e7+ down the line. After 20. c5 dxc5 21. h3 Nge5 22. Kh1 Ng6 23. Bg5 Be5 White must make significant concessions to prevent checkmate or the loss of his bishop.

20. h3 Qxh4 21. hxg4 Ne5!



22. Qxd4?

The losing mistake. It's likely that my opponent missed the game continuation.

During the game, I thought 22. Rxd4 was the best try for White, but this still loses after 22. ... Nxg4 23. Bd3 Qh2+ 24. Kf1 Qh1+ 25. Ke2 f3+! 26. gxf3 Qxf3+ 27. Ke1 Re8+.

Neither of us could find the only saving move, 22. Ne7+!! After 22. ... Rxe7 23. Rxd4 Rf8 (23. ... Nxg4? 24. Qxf4) 24. Rxf4! Nxg4 25. Rxf8+ Kxf8, White has 26. Qf4+! protecting both h2 and f2, with check. Black has nothing better than to transition to a better ending with 26. ... Rf7 27. Qg3 Qxg3. An incredible resource to keep the game going.

22. ... Nxg4 23. Bd3 c5!

The queen must abandon the key f2-pawn.

24. Ne7+ Rxe7 25. Qd5+ Rf7 26. Rae1 Qxf2+ 27. Kh1 Qh4+ 28. Kg1 f3! 29. Re8+ Rxe8 30. Rxe8+ Kg7 31. gxf3 Qf2+, White resigned.

Overall, a nice attacking win and personally my highest-rated scalp to date.

With Gupta winning over Gordon, that gave TJ the match.

For his part, Liang said the team atmosphere led him to fly back from a tournament in the United Arab Emirates to play with his team of current and former classmates and professors, and sat down immediately to play GM Francesco Rambaldi.

"I generally play everything; if there are tournaments to play, generally I like to play them," Liang said. "It's just a fun tournament for me — it's also pretty strong," he added, noting that he played three fellow GMs in the tournament and was dinged for a draw by WGM Iris Mou. But in the end, the atmosphere of the USATE was fun for him, and "I just always like playing chess against anyone."

The Last Round

In the final round, Checks and Balances were up against co-leaders Check Republic. Slate lost; Zhuang won; Su drew. It all came down to Board 4:

RUY LOPEZ (C78)

Matthew Tripodi (1990)

Aarush Gupta (1884)

USATE (6), Parsippany, 02.16.2026

Annotations by Aarush Gupta

Big nerves going into this game! The final round of the tournament, with two teams with perfect scores going head to head. This was quite the memorable game, and you will soon see why.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6



Before and after with Captain Andrew Johnson from the NYPD team





WCM Abigail Zhou (R) leads the Queens & Knights Castle team

5. 0-0 b5 6. Bb3 Bc5 7. d3 h6!?

Slightly unusual; generally Black would play 7. ... d6 8. c3 h6.

8. c3 d6

We transposed to the regular line, but White could have switched it up slightly with a standard idea such as a2-a4, which could have led to a novelty soon and made the position less familiar.

9. Nbd2 0-0 10. Re1 Ne7 11. Nf1 Ng6 12. Ng3 Bb6 13. a4 Rb8



All basic preparation up until now; my opponent and I had practically blitzed out our moves. This is quite an orthodox position, and it is balanced as well. Here, however, my opponent took a few minutes.

14. d4

Getting some action going in the center. I thought of several ways to continue in this position, including 14. ... Re8 or 14. ... c5. I also took a step back to look at our team's situation: Kyle's and Kevin's games

seemed pretty equal, while Kent's position was quite dubious. This meant I needed to play for a win!

14. ... Bg4!

I wanted to start creating imbalances in the position here, which Stockfish likes. This activates my final minor piece, and my position hardly has a weakness.

15. axb5?!

My opponent removes pressure from the queenside with this trade, but that gives me more freedom to gain an edge, as my pieces are superior (compare particularly our dark-squared bishops).

15. ... axb5 16. Qd3 Re8 17. d5 Qd7

A prophylactic, anticipating h2-h3.

18. Bc2

There are all sorts of possibilities after 18. h3 Bxh3!?. One line (not forced) goes 19. gxf3 Qxf3 20. Be3 Bxe3 21. Rxe3 Ng4 22. Re1?? Nh4 23. Nxh4 Qh2+ 24. Kf1 Qxf2 mate.

18. ... Qc8?!

I played this for two reasons: First, I had to be tactically careful — if my b-pawn were to move for any reason, Bc2-a4 would be a lurking threat. Secondly, if White plays Bc2-d1 and tries to be defensively resourceful, then h2-h3 becomes a real threat, so I need the d7-square open for my bishop.

19. Bd1

My opponent thought for about 15 minutes before playing this. It's funny that both of us played a series of two moves that accomplished what could have been done in only one.

19. ... Nf4!

An important find, realizing I had good control of the dark-square complex in the center.

20. Bxf4 exf4 21. Nf1 Nd7?!

Headed for the e5-square, but it isn't completely accurate. 21. ... Ra8 kills off White's active rook, which became an issue later in the game.

22. N1d2

22. Qxb5 loses to 22. ... Bxf2+.

22. ... f5?

A bad dynamic but also positional mistake. I didn't spend much time on this, but I should have thought it through more deeply to evaluate the ramifications of the trades to come. White actually starts to regain momentum, and my edge in activity starts to fall apart. Black should keep the pawn structure firm, and instead seek to improve the remaining pieces. One line is 22. ... Qd8 23. h3 Bxf3 24. Nxf3 Qf6.

23. h3 Bxf3 24. Bxf3 fxe4 25. Bxe4 Ne5 26. Qc2 Qd8

I still thought I was doing slightly better here, contrary to the engine's belief.

27. Nf3 Qf6 28. Nxe5 Rxe5



GM Alex Stripunsky



GM Leonid Yudasin



GM Max Dlugy



Our pawn structures are identical, and we also have opposite-colored bishops. The only imbalance here was time, but we were only 12 moves away from sudden death, and I had 15 minutes vs. my opponent's 25. This game was heading towards a draw, meaning that one of our other boards would have to win, or the match outcome would not be favorable.

29. Bf3 h5?

I played this move to stop my opponent from swinging the bishop to g4 and then e6, but I overlooked a very basic move. I already knew that if 30. Rxe5 dxe5, the pawn on h5 is simply hanging, so that was not an option. That only left 30. Rxe5 Qxe5, but I missed the fact that the g6-square would be open.

30. Rxe5 Qxe5 31. Qe2?!

White misses the chance to turn the tide with 31. Qg6!. White attacks h5 (and rescuing it is not feasible); White's queen would have massive superiority over my other pieces, and without careful play, this position could easily transform into a disaster.

31. ... Qxe2 32. Bxe2 g6

It's completely equal once again.

33. b4 Kg7 34. Bxb5! Bd4

The alternative here was 34. ... Bxf2+!, but I decided against it because 35. Kxf2 Rxb5 36. Ra7 Rxd5 37. Rxc7+ felt less clear. I knew I could still hold a draw, but it was higher risk.

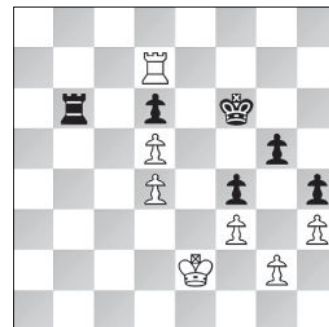
35. cxd4 Rxb5 36. Ra7 Kf6 37. Rxc7 Rxb4

I went for this instead. White might be up a pawn, but holding this felt slightly easier.

38. Rd7 Rb6 39. f3 g5 40. Kf2 h4

Sudden death time is now in play, so now we take the time to think through this endgame (but even with extra time, things started getting twisty very soon).

41. Ke2



This position was slightly worrisome for me, only because White has an extra pawn (even though it's doubled). I knew this was a draw, but I didn't have leeway to be even slightly inaccurate, or it would take a great toll. At this point, Kent and Kevin were done with their games, and the match was at 1-1. Kyle's position was also completely drawn, meaning that if I failed to draw this game, the match was going to be lost.

41. ... Rb2+ 42. Kd3 Rb3+?!

This is where the chaos begins. This felt like a reasonable try during the game, but in hindsight, it would have been much simpler had I just played 42. ... Rxd6+ Ke7 44. Re6+ Kd7, as progress for either side seems very limited. If White's focus shifts towards advancing his own pawns, Black's rook can chop off the pawns on the kingside and get their own passers.

43. Kc4 Rb6?!

After I played this, it started to kick in: I knew that I had made the wrong choice a move earlier, and that I had to find an escape here.

44. Kc3 Kf5??

I could not see what to play here, and this seemed like the best option. According to the computer, 44. ... Ra6 was best, but all I saw during the game was 45. Kc4 Rb6? 46. Kd3, which I thought was worse anyways, but 45. ... Ra4+ 46. Kd3 Ra3+ 47. Kc4 Ra4+ 48. Kb5 Rxd4 49. Rxd6+ Ke7 was the miss in my thinking. With 44. ... Kf5, I thought I found a "fortress" of some sort, where White's pieces could not get past the barrier that my rook and king form. Little did I know! My opponent outplayed me in this position, and I started taking blow after blow.

45. Rc7 Rb1 46. Rd7 Rb6 47. Rf7+! Kg6 48. Rc7! Rb1 49. Rc6! Rg1 50. Rxd6+!

Here I knew I was losing completely. You might notice that the pawn imbalance is similar to what it was back when I could have played 42. ... Rxd6, but here my king can be boxed out because of its distance

from White's passed pawns.

50. ... Kf7 51. Re6

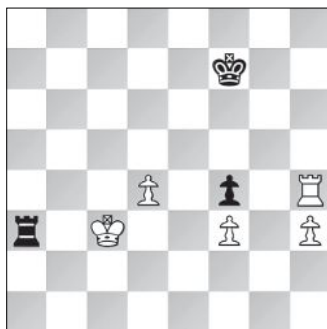
Sure enough — boxed out.

51. ... Rxf2 52. Re5 Ra2 53. d6 Ra6 54.

Rxf5 Rxd6 55. Rh5 Ra6

The final try. At this point, after the complex calculations, it boiled down to this position, with my opponent and I both having less than a minute. This is completely lost now, but I can go for a swindle.

56. Rxf4 Ra3+



57. Kb4??

And that is what happens!

The situation is 1½-1½ (Kent lost; Kevin won; Kyle drew), and a draw here is all my team needs to become the leading co-champions (the other matchup between 5/5 teams ended in a tie, but we are ahead on tie-breaks). The entire ballroom is empty, and my opponent and I have the last ongoing game of the tournament. Tons of spectators are around; my teammates are behind me anxiously discussing the position, and my time is ticking down. But here I felt a bit of shock. I realized that White can't do anything about their d4-pawn (because it looks something like the Philidor position). It soon settled in for my team and I that we were about to become champions of USATE 2026!

The miss was 57. Kc4 Rxf3 58. Kd5 Kf6 59. Ke4, progressing toward my last pawn.

57. ... Rxf3 58. Kc5 Ke6 59. d5+ Kd7 60.

Rh7+ Kd8 61. Kd6 Ke8 62. Rh6

Ten seconds left for my opponent!

62. ... Rg3

Five seconds left for me!

63. Rf6 f3 64. Kc6 Rxf3 65. d6 f2 66. d7+

Ke7 67. Rxf2

If 67. Rf8 Rd3.

67. ... Rc3+ 68. Kd5 Kxd7

And with three seconds left for each player, both of us shaking as the delay was our only lifeline, my opponent put forth their hand and said "Draw?". I contently shook it to end the match at 2-2.

Certainly one of the most memorable games I have ever played, and the factor that made it so special was the heat of the moment, something that I had never experienced so intensely until then.

That kept TJ in a share of first, but opened the door for three teams to join them. With a four-hour drive back to Virginia (in separate cars), Checks and Balances had to head home without knowing where they'd ended up.

"I was sleeping," Zhuang said, "and I woke up to my phone just constantly buzzing, and that's when I saw the messages in our group chat saying that we had won first place on tiebreaks. It was an incredible moment, because we had come a very long way over the course of the weekend." ♠



PHOTO: ADRIAN ROBERTS

Geezers Rule!

BY HANON RUSSELL

I have been playing in the U.S. Amateur Team East for many years; Steve Doyle and his terrific staff make it one of the most enjoyable tournament experiences anywhere. This year our team, Dracarys, finished a half-point out of first. That's a very good result, but there is a surprising story behind it.

The team was led by three-time Connecticut champion Ian Harris, with Mikhail Koganov on Board 2 followed by Oliver Chernin on Board 3 and yours truly on Board 4. Going into the final round Monday afternoon, the team was 4-1, but Oliver and I had individual scores of 5-0. But of course, there is that feisty gremlin that has affected most players in the final round of a three-day tournament: fatigue. Oliver is 70 and I'm 78, and I can't speak for the others, but there was no question that I was dragging my butt as we sat down to play veteran GM Joel Benjamin's team.

Chernin nailed down his perfect score with a relatively quick win, while Koganov won on Board 2. Meanwhile, on Board 4, I had white and went from an ineffective opening

to a messy middlegame. The following position was reached after Black's 28th move. My queen is under attack, and I am down two pawns.

PERFECTO

Hanon Russell (2045)

Hunter Ku (1831)

USATE (6), Parsippany, 02.16.2026



WHITE TO MOVE

I had visions of a queen desperado after 29. Qxa5?!, but unfortunately after the "counter-desperado" 28. ... Qxc6!, it is Black who is playing for only two results. But if I play 29. Ne7+ first, it works. There followed 29. ... Kh7 (29. ... Kf8 30. Nxd5+ Nxa3 31. Bd6+) 30. Qxa5! and White won a piece and later the game. To complete the round, Harris held Benjamin to a draw on Board 1.

What a finish for team Dracarys! Two players — neither one an IM nor GM — with perfect scores. We wondered whether any team had ever previously done this!?

Steve Doyle later told me that I was the oldest player to finish with a perfect score in USATE history, edging out GMs Art Bisguier (75) and Samuel Reshevsky (77). I understand that I was not facing world-class opposition, but still, it was enough to put a smile on this old man's face that lasted a few days. ♡

2026 U.S. AMATEUR TEAM-EAST

AT A GLANCE

FEB. 14-16, 2026 | PARSIPPANY, N.J.

1st-5th: Thomas Jefferson Checks & Balances (Denis Barry Top Team Award), Bmore Bandits, Crouching Tigers, Check Republic, Magnus Carlsen Has Great Jeans, 5½/6.

CLASS PRIZES

UNDER 2100: Chessmates 1, 5. **UNDER 2000:** Happy New Year of the Knight, 4½. **UNDER 1900:** Chessnuts Roasting Over an Open File, 4. **UNDER 1800:** CMU-C 4½. **UNDER 1700:** f3 e5 g4 Qh4 Mate, 4. **UNDER 1600:** Nightmare, 5½. **UNDER 1500:** Chessanity Sees, 3. **UNDER 1400:** Locus Swarm, 3. **UNDER 1300:** LHS Knights, 3. **UNDER 1200:** Do Re Mi A, 3. **UNDER 1000:** Karpov Diem, 2½. **TOP COLLEGE TEAM:** CMU-A, 4½. **TOP HS TEAM:** Newark Academy Red, 4. **TOP MIDDLE SCHOOL:** HM Lions, 3½. **TOP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:** You're Looking Desperado, 3. **TOP 2 SCHOLASTIC TEAMS (COLLINS AWARD):** Mr. Take Your Bishop, 5; Nightmare on Board Street, 4½. **TOP MIXED DOUBLES:** Kakamora, 4. **TOP SENIORS:** Don't Think Twice, 4½. **TOP MILITARY:** Merchant Marine Academy M, 2. **TOP COMPANY TEAM:** NYPD Chess Team Parabellum, 3. **TOP COACHES:** Alan's Avengers, 5. **TOP FEMALE TEAM:** Hit It From the Back Rank, 4½. **TOP FAMILY:** 3 Fried Livers + A Designated Driver, 3. **TOP FUTURE TEAM (ALL PLAYERS UNDER AGE 10):** Queens & Knights Castle, 3½. **TOP MILITARY COLLEGE:** USMC, 1½. **TOP PARENT/CHILD (2 PAIRS):** Nonsens Ki Knight, 3.

STATE TEAMS

CONN.: Best By Test, 4½. **DEL.:** Chess Camps Knights, 1. **MASS.:** Crouching Tigers, 5½. **MD.:** Louise and the Alexanders, 3. **N.J.:** Garden State Passers, 5. **N.Y. (BENJAMIN AWARD):** Operation Absolute Rooks, 5. **PENN.:** Your Last Move Loses, 4. **VA.:** Thomas Jefferson Checks & Balances, 5½.

BEST GIMMICK 1: Alan's Avengers. **BEST GIMMICK 2:** NYPD. **BEST NAME:** Our King Has No Checks and Balances.

New North Stars

A new champion is crowned at the USATN.

BY **JJ LANG**



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO's four-year dominance of the U.S. Amateur Team-North came to an end this

year, while the victors also won the award that's picked by the crowd and can stay in people's memories far longer.

Tata Steal Your Girl — Deepak Aaron on Board 1, FM Eugene Yanayt on Board 2, Hursh Mehta on Board 3, and Finn Belew on Board 4 — not only won the title Feb. 20-22 in Schaumburg, Ill., but took home the title for Best Team Name.

Organizer and Chief TD Glenn Panner said that's the first time he's seen that happen: "The cleverness over the board hasn't translated to cleverness off the board coming up with team names."

After a promising 3/3 start, Tata faced off against UChicago C, which, despite its name, was the top team from Hyde Park. Tata won 3-1 in a round where all players were keenly observing the other boards.

Early on, Mehta declined a draw in a better position because Boards 1 and 2 were unclear. But then, as Mehta put it, "[even though] the position was clearly a two-result position ... I managed to mess up and lose — while everyone else on our team won!"

Yanayt explained that "with Finn winning cleanly as White on Board 4, and Hursh looking like he would win or draw on Board 3 most of the game, our opponents got a little bit desperate on Boards 1 and 2 in equal positions." Belew's win is below:

LONDON SYSTEM (D00)

Finn Belew (1969)

Shriram Kavaturu (1688)

USATN (4), Schaumburg, 02.22.2026

Annotations by JJ Lang

1. d4 d5 2. Nc3 Nf6 3. Bf4 c5 4. e4 Nxe4

5. Nxe4 dxe4 6. dxc5 Qa5+ 7. c3 Qxc5 8.

g3 g6 9. Bg2 Bg7 10. Bxe4 0-0 11. h4

White embarks on a typical plan against the fianchetto setup. It's worth seeing how Black could have defended better, as a few errors are all it takes for White to run away with things in positions like this.

11. ... Qb6 12. Qc2 Be6 13. h5 Nd7

14. hxg6



14. ... fxg6?!

An instructive moment. Keeping the structure intact with 14. ... hxg6 gave Black a better position. For instance: 15. Be3 Qa5 16. Nf3 Nf6 shuts down all of White's attacking plans.

15. Be3 Qc7 16. Nf3 Bf5??

After 16. ... Nf6 17. Ng5 is not as deadly as it looks: After 17. ... Bc4 18. 0-0-0 Rad8 White is slightly better thanks to the h-file and split pawns, but Black will enjoy counterplay on the queenside after ... Qc7-a5.

17. Qb3+

Conceding the a2-g8 diagonal was totally inconsistent with playing 14. ... fxg6. Now White wins thematically with an h-file attack.

17. ... Kh8 18. Ng5 h6 19. Bxf5 Rxf5

20. Nf7+ Kh7 21. Nxh6



White is totally winning now.

21. ... Bxh6 22. Rxh6+ Kg7 23. 0-0-0 Nf6 24. Rdh1 Rh5 25. R6xh5 Nxh5 26. Qe6 Rd8 27. Kb1 Qd6 28. Qxd6 Rxd6 29. Bxa7 b6 30. Kc2 Nf6 31. Re1 Kf7 32. Bb8 Rc6 33. Be5 Nd5 34. a3 g5 35. Bd4 Nc7 36. a4 Ne6 37. Kd3 Rd6 38. b4 Nd8 39. Kc4 Nc6 40. Bxb6 Nxb4 41. cxb4 Rxb6 42. b5 Rf6 43. Re2 Ke8 44. Rd2, Black resigned.

Tata entered the fifth and final round as the only team with a perfect 4/4 score, and they were paired against the (much) higher-rated of the two teams a half-point back: Wisconsinites The Big Bishops. A draw would guarantee Tata at least a share of first, but The Big Bishops didn't make things easy.

Calling their opponents "super strong," Yanayt described the round's character as "a little bit of an opposite feel to the previous round. On Board 4, Finn had a reversed KID position and castled long into a buzzsaw, while on Board 3 Hursh missed a tactic and was in the game but never quite recovered."

Given this, Yanayt said, "I was spending a lot of time knowing I likely need to win, but instead I seemed to keep finding moves that can only lose instead."

Yanayt's opponent, Evan Seghers, annotated the game:

SICILIAN DEFENSE (B53)

Evan Seghers (2142)

FM Eugene Yanayt (2268)

USATN (5), Schaumburg, 02.22.2026

Annotations by Evan Seghers

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Qxd4 Nc6 5. Qe3 g6 6. Be2 Bg7 7. 0-0 Nf6 8. Nc3 0-0 9. h3 b6 10. Rd1 Nd7 11. Nd5

More flexible was 11. b3 Nc5 12. Bb2 Bb7 13. Rd2 with an edge.

11. ... Nc5 12. c3?!

Instead, 12. Rb1 was best:

(a) If 12. ... Bb7 13. b4 Nd7 is a stable advantage, while 13. ... Na4? 14. Bb5 is winning.

(b) If 12. ... a5 then 13. a3 a4 14. b4 axb3 e.p. 15. cxb3 still sees White expand on the queenside with a better position.

(c) Black ought to play 12. ... e5, when 13. b4 Ne6 14. a4 Bb7 15. Bf1 Rb8 16. c3 covers the d4-square, preparing to continue on the queenside. Black should play 16. ... Ne7 aiming for ... f7-f5 next, although 17. a5 complicates things.

12. ... Bb7

White's threat of queenside expansion is less frightening now, as Black's knight can regroup to the e5-square.

13. b4 Nd7 14. Rb1 Rc8 15. c4 Nce5 16. Nxe5

More flexible was 16. Nd2 e6 17. Nc3 Qe7 18. Bb2. Black should strike back with 18. ... f5 and an unclear position after 19. f4 Bh6!.

16. ... Nxe5 17. Qa3

The alternative was 17. c5 Bxd5 18. Rxd5 bxc5 19. bxc5 Rxc5 when either capture on c5 would lead to an equal position.

17. ... e6 18. Qxa7 Bxd5?!

The patient 18. ... Rb8 was better: 19. Nc3 runs into 19. ... Nxc4 20. Bxc4 Bxc3 21. Qa3 Bg7 when the position is a bit more flexible for Black.

19. cxd5 Ra8 20. Qb7 Rxa2



21. Rd2?!

Now was White's time to be patient with 21. Bf1, when Black needs to attack on the kingside: 21. ... g5 22. Be3 g4, although White remains a tad better after 23. Rb3 gxh3 24. Bxb6, ignoring the attack.

21. ... Rxd2?!

Best was 21. ... Ra8 22. Rc2 Rb8 with a roughly equal position.

22. Bxd2 exd5 23. Qxd5 Qa8 24. Qxa8

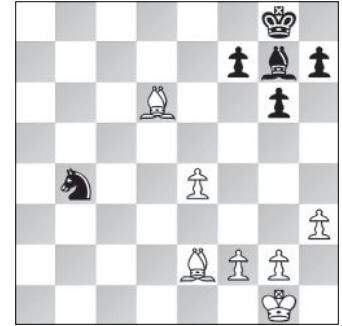
The alternative of 24. Be3 was also strong, allowing 24. ... Qxd5 25. exd5 Rb8 (if 25. ... Nd7 26. Bb5 Nf6 27. Bc6 White is also close

to winning) when 26. Bb5! paralyzes Black's knight, preparing f2-f4 to take it.

24. ... Rxa8 25. Be3?!

It was better to first play 25. Bb5 to freeze Black's knight. After 25. ... Rd8 26. f4 Nd7 27. Be3, Black is struggling to untangle.

25. ... Nc6! 26. Bxb6 Rb8! 27. Bc7 Rxb4 28. Rxb4 Nxb4 29. Bxd6



White is up a pawn and has the two bishops, but Black proves that this is still drawn with accurate defense.

29. ... Nc6 30. f4 Bf8 31. Bc7 Bc5+ 32. Kf1 h5 33. g3 Kf8 34. f5?!

After this push, Black has no problem holding.

34. ... Ke7 35. Bf4 Kf6 36. fxe6 fxe6 37.

Bb5 Ne5 38. Ke2 Bd4 39. Be8 Ba1 40. Be3 Ke7 41. Bb5 Kf7 42. Bf4 Bd4 43. Ba4 Ba1 44. Bd2 Bd4 45. Ba5 Ke7 46. Bb3 Nc6 47. Bd2 Be5 48. Kf2 Kf6 49. Ba4 Bd4+ 50. Be3 Bxe3+! 51. Kxe3 Ne5 52. Kd4 g5 53. Bd1 h4 54. gxh4 gxh4 55. Kd5 Nd3 56. Bg4 Ne5 57. Bc8, draw.



PHOTO: COURTESY MATT ZATKOFF

But Belew then turned things around on Board 4. Belew writes, “Although I started out in a very uncomfortable position — both on the board and for our team’s standings — I managed to push for a win in a complicated position and eventually get the job done.”

KING’S INDIAN ATTACK (A08)

Andrew Schley (1910)

Finn Belew (1969)

USATN (5), Schaumburg, 02.22.2026

Annotations by JJ Lang

1. Nf3 d5 2. g3 e6 3. Bg2 c5 4. 0-0 Nf6 5. d3 Nc6 6. Nbd2 Qc7 7. Re1 Bd6 8. e4 d4 9. Nc4 e5 10. Nxd6+ Qxd6 11. h3 h6 12. Bd2 Be6 13. a3



13. ... Nd7?!

Best might be 13. ... g5 to prevent Nf3-h4, and after 14. b4 Nd7 15. b5 Nd8 16. a4 f6 Black can play for ... h6-h5 with an attack on the opposite flank.

Alternatively, 13. ... 0-0 is perfectly playable. White will play 14. Nh4 and meet 14. ... Qd7 with either Kg1-h2 and f2-f4 or the immediate g2-g4 with some play, but nothing Black has to worry about.

14. Nh4 0-0-0 15. b4 c4?!

The prophylactic 15. ... g6 was best.

16. b5 Ne7 17. Bb4 Nc5 18. Nf5!

Ripping open the center is the best.

18. ... Bxf5 19. exf5 c3

Not 19. ... Nxf5?? 20. Qf3! with a double attack on the f5-knight and the b7-square.

20. Qf3 Rd7 21. f6 gxf6 22. Bxc5 Qxc5 23. Qxf6 Ng6

White transforms the advantage into a position with the better minor piece and pressure against multiple weak black pawns.

24. Be4 Qe7 25. Qf3 Kb8 26. a4 Rg8 27. a5

Qe6 28. Kh2 Ne7 29. a6 b6 30. Qe2 Rc8 31. Rab1?!

A step in the wrong direction. Best was 31. Bg2 to attack the e5-pawn and hold up ... Ne7-d5.

31. ... Nd5 32. Bg2 Re8?!

The right rook was 32. ... Re7 to retain the option of ... Rc8-c5 to defend while attacking the b-pawn.

33. h4 f5 34. Qh5?!

Better was 34. Qf3 when Black’s knight is pinned. Still, Black has more counterplay now than before.

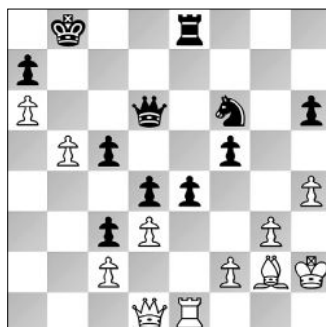
34. ... Nf6 35. Qf3? Rd5?

Black could exploit the misplaced queen with 35. ... e4! followed by 36. Qe2 Qe5 with a raging attack on the kingside.

36. Rb4?

Now, 36. Bh3! was the only way to delay ... e5-e4.

36. ... e4! 37. Qd1 Qd6 38. Rc4 Rc5 39. Rxc5 bxc5



Black’s pawns have become much more dangerous.

40. dxe4?

The last chance was 40. Bh3! Qe5 41. Qb1!, threatening b5-b6 after provoking Black’s queen to vacate the sixth rank.

40. ... fxe4 41. Kg1 c4 42. Qc1 e3 43. fxe3?

More resistant was 43. Qd1 exf2+ 44. Kxf2 Rxe1 45. Qxe1, although Black is still winning, with multiple choices including 45. ... Ng4+ and 45. ... d3.

43. ... Qxg3 44. Qd1 Ng4

Black is winning clearly now.

45. b6 Qh2+ 46. Kf1 Rf8+ 47. Bf3 Qf2 mate.

On Board 1, the players reached this critical position early:

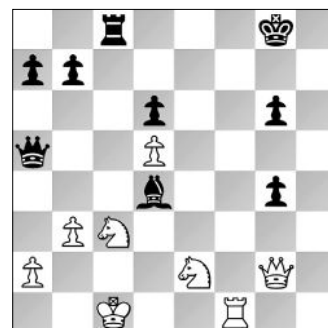
NOT ENOUGH

Deepak Aaron (2374)

Brady Harder (2247)

USATN (5), Schaumburg, 02.22.2026

Annotations by FM Eugene Yanayt



WHITE TO MOVE

1. Qe4?!

White opts for the human move. The cold-blooded 1. Kb1! is winning, though in his mind Aaron was already married to the idea of putting the king on d1.

(a) The materialistic 1. ... Bxc3 loses to 2. Qe4! now that Black cannot play ... Rc8xc3 and can’t defend both the e6- and g6-squares.

(b) The typical 1. ... Rxc3 is refuted by 2. Nxd4! when White remains up a piece.

(c) Black’s best try might be 1. ... Qa6 but 2. Nxd4 Qd3+ 3. Nc2 Rxc3 wins after the straightforward 4. Qf2 when White has the more powerful attack (and the extra piece).

1. ... Rxc3+

This has to be tried.

2. Kd1

Now, 2. Kb1!? Rxb3+ is not so simple after 3. axb3 Qa1+ 4. Kc2. But still, Black cannot continue checking for long after ... Qa1-a2+, while 4. ... Qxf1 5. Nxd4 leaves White up a piece, and Black’s king is too exposed to believe the g-pawn will have time to promote.

2. ... Qxa2

The engine proposes 2. ... Bg7 to get the bishop out of harm’s way. After 3. Qe6+ Kh7 4. Nxc3 Qxc3 5. Rh1+ Bh6 the endgame after 6. Qf7+ Qg7 7. Qxg7+ Kxg7 is forced, when White still has to be accurate. Best is 8. Re1! (not 8. Rg1?! Bf4 9. Rxg4 g5 when White has a hard time making progress) 8. ... Kf7 9. Rf1+ Ke7 when the f4-square is covered, so Black cannot build a fortress with ... Bh6-f4, and 10. Ke2 Bg7 11. Rg1 Be5 12. Rxg4 Kf6 13. Kd3 wins, since Black is not in time to blockade the rook along the fourth rank, meaning that after 13. ... g5 14. Rb4 White’s rook remains active, securing the full point.

White has two winning moves here, but more than two candidate moves!

3. Qxg6+?

It turns out that both knight captures were winning: 3. Nxd4 Qa1+ 4. Kd2! Qxf1 and now the immediate 5. Kxc3?! allows 5. ... Qc1+ 6. Nc2 Qg5 when White has to worry some about Black's g4-pawn, but 5. Qxg6+ allows White to clean up Black's pawns before recouping the rook. After 5. ... Kf8 6. Qxd6+ Kg7 White's plan is to continue checking until Black's resource with ... Qf1-c1+ and ... Qc1-g5 is covered: 7. Qe7+ Kg6 8. Qe6+ Kg5 9. Qe5+ Kg6 10. Kxc3 Qc1+ 11. Nc2 and with ... Qc1-g5 now entering a lost endgame, Black can resign.

Also, if 3. Nxc3 Qxb3+ (or 3. ... Qa1+ 4. Nb1 shuts Black out) 4. Qc2 ties things together.

3. ... Bg7

The game continued, but eventually ended in a draw.

But White's last move left no winning chances against accurate play, and it had already been played before the turnarounds on Boards 2 and 4. Board 1 continued until it was the last game in the playing hall.

"No one, including the players, quite knew it was drawn though," Yanayt said, before correcting himself, "or actually, Black kind of did!" The final 2-2 result easily could have tipped either way.

The other team on 3½/4 — Elkhart Chess

B.U.M.s — had an average rating of 1604.75 yet punched well above its rating against four higher-rated teams. But the talented youngsters of AMAL-Zero proved too much for the B.U.M.s, climbing into the five-way tie for second with 4/5 and leaving the B.U.M.s in a still very impressive tie for seventh.

Chaotic Chess

The Big Bishops finished second on tie-breaks with 4/5, improving on their fourth-place finish from 2025. The team has competed in the USATN since 2019, and the core of their team goes back even further.

Seghers and Andrew Schley still compete regularly, and Schley runs the very active US Chess Affiliate Growth Program, but Brady Harder has a different relationship to competition: The majority of his tournaments since 2019 have been USATNs. Yet in that time he's become a master, beaten multiple masters and drawn with titled players such as IMs Kostya Kavutskiy and Dimitar Mardov.

"His secret? No idea," Seghers said.

He added that Harder "plays insane chess," with "a carefully curated opening repertoire to maximize chaos."

This chaotic style was on display in Harder's win over FM Avi Kaplan in an upset of the event's highest-rated team, The Frauds (2193.0), in Round 2:

KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE, MAKAGONOV SYSTEM (E71)

FM Avi Kaplan (2403)

Brady Harder (2247)

USATN (2), Schaumburg, 02.22.2026

Annotations by Evan Seghers

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. h3 0-0 6. Be3 e5 7. d5 Na6 8. g4 Nc5 9. f3 a5 10. Nge2 Ne8 11. h4 f5 12. gxf5 gxf5 13. exf5 Bxf5 14. Ng3 Qd7 15. Qd2 e4



I remember this moment strikingly because Black played this nearly instantly. Brady has a great feel for this type of position, but I still wonder whether this came from theory or just his intuition that his dark-squared bishop wanted freedom.

16. fxe4 Bg4 17. Be2 b6 18. 0-0-0 Nf6 19. Rhg1 Rae8 20. h5

Sitting next to this game, I thought the odds



Gurugrahan Gurumoorthi (center) leads The United Kings of America!

PHOTO: COURTESY MATT ZATKOFF

that Brady would survive this position were close to nil. I was also lost in my game, but I was distraught, while Brady looked like emotionally he had just started the game.

20. ... Bxe2 21. Qxe2 Rf7 22. h6 Bh8 23. Rdf1 Kf8 24. Rf4 Ke7 25. Rgf1 Kd8

The king runs to safety. I had already lost at this point, and was now focused on this game.

26. Bd4 Ref8 27. Qf3 Qh3 28. Kb1 Qxh6 29. Nf5

The tension is building.

29. ... Qh2 30. Rh1 Qd2 31. Rd1



31. ... Nfxe4!

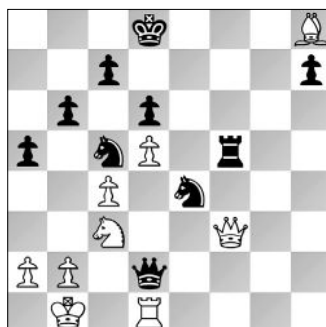
A thunderbolt of a move. All of a sudden

every single one of Black's pieces is fully active and full of purpose. White is actually still better here, but Avi told me after the game that basically he was in shock because he had completely missed this move. After around 20 minutes of thought, he tried to find his way through. As someone who has been up a clean knight and lost in classical against Avi, I know that he can usually find his way through the madness without much trouble, but this is just too much.

32. Bxh8

White's still better after 32. Nxe4 Nxe4 33. Qg4.

32. ... Rxf5 33. Rxf5 Rxf5



34. Qh1

The losing move, but the only saving move is not obvious, although one of Avi's teammates apparently spotted it while observing. It's not 34. Qxf5?? Nxc3+ 35. bxc3 Qxd1+ 36. Kb2 Nd3+ when White has to give up the queen to stop mate.

Avi did not consider 34. Bf6+! but he was showing me this moment on his phone after the game and said that his teammate (who crushed me) asked him, "Why did you not play 34. Bf6+? You were completely fine." Avi said something like, "I was not even close to considering this move! What is so obvious about this?" But it turns out this was the only move to keep the game level. The point is that 34. ... Rxf6?? looks playable, but it is losing! There's a brilliant counter-attraction motif with 35. Qxf6+! Nxf6 36. Rxd2. If 34. ... Ke8! 35. Qg4! and White threatens mate while covering the d1-rook from tactical shots. Play continues 35. ... Nxc3+ 36. bxc3 Qxd1+ 37. Qxd1 Rxf6 with an equal game.

34. ... Nxc3+ 35. Bxc3 Qe2

Suddenly, Black is totally winning.

36. Re1 Qd3+ 37. Ka1 h5 38. Qh4+ Kc8 39. a3 Kb7 40. Ka2 a4 41. Rg1 Ne4 42. Rc1 Rf1 43. Rxf1 Nxc3+ 44. bxc3 Qe2+ 45. Kb1 Qxf1+ 46. Kc2 Qe2+ 47. Kc1 Qa2 48. Qxh5 Qxa3+ 49. Kc2 Qb3+ 50. Kd2 Qxc4 51. Kc2 a3 52. Qe8 Qxd5 53. Qa4 Qg2+ 54. Kd3 a2 55. Ke3 Qg3+ 56. Ke2 Qxc3 57. Qxa2 b5 58. Qd5+ Qc6, White resigned.

U.S. AMATEUR TEAM-NORTH AT A GLANCE

FEB. 20-22, 2026 | SCHAUMBURG, ILL.

UNDER 2200

1ST: Tata Steal Your Girl, 4½/5. **2ND-6TH:** The Big Bishops, Game of Throws, AMAL-Zero, Legacy & Rise, St. Charles Knights, 4.

UNDER 1600

1ST: The Black-Rank Mates, 4½. **2ND-7TH:** Bird Is the Word, Prophylactic Vibes, SaCWRUfice the Queen!, Gavins last tournament EVER!!!!, Lawrence University, Nightmare Mode, 4.

OTHER PRIZES

UNDER 2200

TOP COLLEGE TEAM: SaCWRUfice the Rook!, 3. **TOP HIGH SCHOOL:** My King's Kinda Homeless, The Enpassant Files, 2½. **TOP JUNIOR TEAM:** AMAL-Zero, 3. **TOP MIXED DOUBLES:** Legacy & Rise, 4. **TOP SENIOR TEAM:** Four on the Flohr, 2½.

UNDER 1600

TOP HIGH SCHOOL TEAM: The Knight Howlers, 2½. **TOP K-8 TEAM:** Keep Kann and Caro On, 2½.

Complete results are available at www.chessweekend.com/results.

Side events

The weekend was rounded out with side events including a blitz tournament, a costume competition, and, for the first time, skits. IM Sam Schmakel won the Blitz event with a 10/10 score ahead of 108 other competitors.

In the costume competition, a group of adults dressed as Teletubbies (The Teletubbies) edged out a group of cute children dressed as royals (The United Kingdom of America!) in the fan-decided final.

The winning skit came from Men in Blackburne, who were dressed as Agents K and J from *Men in Black*. They offered advice on how to counter the Alien Gambit in the Caro-Kann before breaking it down with a dance number complete with neuralyzers. While the field of 115 teams was slightly down from last year's record 140, it was still the the fourth consecutive year with more than 100 teams. ♠

In the Clutch

GM-elect Liam Putnam comes through to win the National Open on tiebreak.

BY IM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN



THE NATIONAL OPEN IS MY favorite open tournament in the U.S. As a native Angeleno, when I lived only a four-hour drive away from Las Vegas, it was a staple in my chess calendar. Nowadays, I dread playing two rounds a day, but I like the tournament so much that I am willing to make the trip from St. Louis and endure both the schedule and the scorching Vegas sun.

The festival kicks off with the Women's Open and includes plenty of side events, such as simuls, youth tournaments, a one-day camp, quads, game analysis, and, of course, a blitz tournament. They also have daily one-day tournaments for beginners, a brilliant way for someone new to chess to try out a tournament and feel part of a big event without a big commitment. There is really something for everyone.

Of course, the jewel of the festival is the Open, which attracts dozens of titled players. The early leader of the tournament was IM Oleksii Bilych, who started off with 5/5 but then lost two games in a row. The three eventual winners were GMs Arman Mikaelyan and Christopher Yoo and GM-elect Liam Putnam. Arman and Christopher both suffered losses early in the tournament, which goes to show how important resilience is in a long event. After losing in Round 1, Arman won four games in a row, then three more after drawing WGM Zoey Tang in Round 5. I really enjoyed his Round 7 win against IM Samrug Narayanan.

RUY LOPEZ (C88)

IM Samrug Narayanan (2529)
GM Arman Mikaelyan (2597)
National Open (7), 06.13.2026

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6
5. 0-0 Be7 6. Re1 b5 7. Bb3 0-0 8. a4 Rb8
9. d3

White can take the ... Nc6-a5 option away with 9. axb5 axb5 10. d3.

9. ... d6 10. c3 Na5 11. Ba2 c5 12. axb5
axb5 13. Bg5 h6 14. Bxf6 Bxf6

White willingly gives up the bishop pair to get better control of the d5-square and to leave Black with a bad bishop, since so many black pawns are on dark squares.

15. Bd5 c4 16. Nbd2

White could also play 16. Na3 with the idea of transferring the knight to d5 via c2 and e3.

16. ... Be6 17. dxc4 Nxc4 18. Nxc4 bxc4



19. Nd2!?

An unusual decision. Normally, when one side has control of the square in front of a backward or isolated pawn, they want to make sure they can recapture with a piece on that square.

After 19. Re2 White has the plan of putting the rook on the d-file, then perhaps transferring the f3-knight, which is completely controlled by black pawns, to d5 via e1, c2, and e3. It isn't much — Black has enough



Liam Putnam

counterplay along the b-file that White shouldn't have the time to do all this. Nonetheless, I think this is the way for White to fight for an advantage.

19. ... Bxd5

Of course, Black will take the opportunity to exchange when White has to recapture with a pawn. Now that the d-file is closed, it takes the sting off the pawn weakness on d6.

20. exd5 Rxb2 21. Nxc4 Rb5 22. Ra6 Be7
Black now has easy play on the kingside.

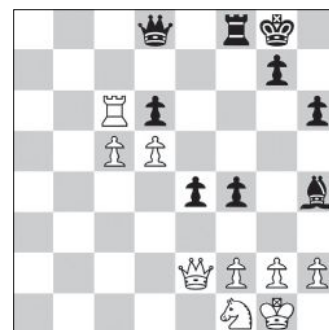
23. Ne3 f5 24. Rc6 e4

White is slowly starting to get outplayed. Black's pawns are no longer all on the dark squares, so the bishop will come to life soon.

25. c4 Rb2 26. c5 Bh4!

Black is launching his attack.

27. Re2 Rxe2 28. Qxe2 f4 29. Nf1



29. ... e3

An unexpected way to attack. Normally, Black would want to play ... f4-f3, but the e4 pawn is hanging: White's king is perfectly safe after 29. ... f3 30. Qxe4 fxe2 31. Ng3. Instead, he is playing on the dark squares and using the fact that the white rook is far from the king and cannot join the defense.

30. g3?

White's position will collapse after this.

White had to play 30. fxe3, when after 30. ... Qg5 threatening ... f4-f3 he has to be brave with 31. cxd6. It's not so much about greed as about opening the c-file for the rook. (Of course, capturing a pawn in the process never hurts.)

Play can go 31. ... f3 32. Qd2 fxe2 33. Qxg2 Bf2+ 34. Kh1 Bxe3 threatening mate. If 35. Qxg5? Rxf1+ 36. Kg2 Rf2+ 37. Kg3 hxe5 38. d7 Rf8 39. Rc8 Bb6, and 35. d7?? walks into 35. ... Rxf1+ 36. Qxf1 Qxd5+ 37. Qg2 Qd1+ 38. Qf1 Qxf1 mate. It looks unpleasant for White after 35. Rc2 Bb6 as his king is weak and the d6-pawn will most likely fall. But there aren't too many pieces left on the board, so the white king isn't coming under a huge attack.

30. ... exf2+ 31. Kh1

Black wins material after 31. Qxf2 fxe3 32. Qe3 gxh2+ 33. Nxh2 (33. Kxh2 Rxf1) 33. ... Bf2+ 34. Qxf2 Rxf2 35. Kxf2.

31. ... fxe3 32. hxe3 Bxe3 33. cxd6 Qg5

34. Qe6+ Kh8 35. Rc4 Qh5+ 36. Kg2 Qf3+, White resigned.

Christopher lost to Zoey in the second round, but recovered with three wins in a row and finished the tournament strong, scoring 2½ points in his last three games,

all against grandmasters. To keep with the theme of my column and the endgame we will see here later, I had to analyze his third-round endgame.

COULD HAVE BEEN

GM Christopher Yoo (2657)

Daniel Yang (2270)

National Open (3), 06.11.2026



WHITE TO MOVE

46. g5 Rh5

Correctly attacking the enemy pawn from the side and defending his pawn.

47. Rg7+ Kc8!

It feels counterintuitive, but keeping the king on the back rank is the correct defense. After 47. ... Kc6 48. g6 Rh6 49. c3 Black is now in a *zugzwang*: 49. ... Kd6 and now 50. Rb7!, the typical skewer idea in rook endgames. White wins after 50. ... Kc6 (50. ... Rxe6 51. Rxb6+) 51. g7 Rg6 52. Rf7 followed by collecting the h-pawn and running with the king to h7.

48. c3 Kb8 49. Rg8+ Kb7 50. g6 Rh3?

This lets White reposition his rook.

The rook has to maintain contact with

the g-pawn, and after 50. ... Rh6 51. g7 Rg6 52. Kxh2 Rg5 this is an easy draw. The white pawn has reached the seventh rank and the white rook is poorly placed in front of it. All Black has to do is to either wait with the rook on the g-file or oscillate between a7 and b7 with the king. Once the white king approaches the g7-pawn, all Black has to do is to keep checking until the pawn and the king are separated, then get back behind the pawn: 53. Kh3 Ka7 (but not 53. ... Kc7?? 54. Ra8 Rxe7 55. Ra7+ picking up the rook) 54. Kh4 Rg1 55. Kh5 Kb7 56. Kh6. Now that the pawn is defended, White is threatening to bring the rook to f8 so Black needs to check: 56. ... Rh1+ 57. Kg6 Rg1+ 58. Kf6 Rf1+ 59. Ke5 Rg1.

51. Rf8 Rg3 52. Rf6

The h2-pawn will fall, and the white king will run towards the g-pawn and assist in its promotion. The main difference here is that the White rook is in better position beside the pawn rather than in front of it.

52. ... Rxc3

This loses immediately.

53. Kxh2 Rc2+ 54. Kg3 Rc1 55. Kg2, Black resigned.

He cannot stop the pawn from promoting: 55. ... Rc2+ 56. Rf2 Rc3 57. g7.

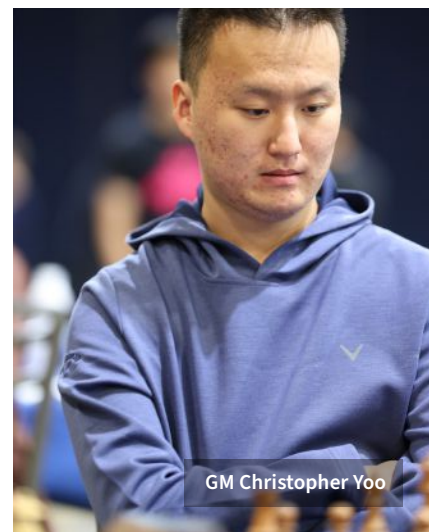
Liam was the only co-winner who went undefeated. Going into the final round, he trailed Arman and Christopher by a half-point as they faced each other on the top board. Their quick draw guaranteed them a share for first, putting Liam in a must-win situation. He came through against GM Ehsan Ghaem Maghami, and won the Edmondson Cup on tiebreaks.



WGM Zoey Tang



GM Arman
Mikaelyan



GM Christopher Yoo

RUY LOPEZ (C84)**IM Liam Putnam (2588)****GM Ehsan Ghaem Maghami (2553)****National Open (9), 06.14.2026**

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6 5. 0-0 Be7 6. d3 b5 7. Bb3 d6

Black is ready to play 8. ... Na5 and exchange the knight for the bishop.

8. a3

This is one way to avoid the exchange. Giving the bishop the c2-square with 8. c3 is another.

8. ... 0-0 9. Nc3 Bg4 10. Be3 Nd4 11. Bxd4 exd4 12. Nd5 Nd7 13. h3 Bxf3

So far, we are following theory.

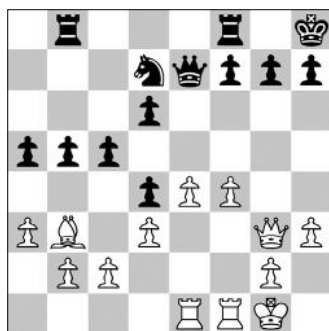
14. Nxe7+

14. Qxf3 is the most common move in this position. After 14. ... c6 White can still trade on e7, but many players opt to keep more pieces on the board with 15. Nf4.

14. ... Qxe7 15. Qxf3

We have entered a bishop vs. knight position; we're already on Move 15 and so far there have been no pawn trades. The pawn structure allows the bishop to enjoy a long diagonal aiming at the enemy king, and White also has very straightforward play on the kingside. I think White's position is easier to play and more pleasant.

15. ... Rab8 16. Qg3 a5 17. f4 Kh8 18. Rae1 c5

**19. e5!**

White has put all his pieces on their best squares and is ready to open the position. The big threat is simply pushing the pawn to e6.

19. ... dxe5 20. fxe5 c4

Black is willing to give up a pawn in order to shut down the annoying bishop.

21. dxc4 a4 22. Ba2 b4 23. axb4

The immediate 23. c5 would have been even stronger, but these lines are very much based on engine analysis: 23. ... Qxc5 (23. ... Nxc5 24. axb4 Rxb4 25. Qa3 Rb5 26. Bc4 Rbb8 27. Bxf7 winning a pawn tactically as the queen is overworked: 27. ... Rxf7 28. Rxf7 Qxf7 29. Qxc5 and more of Black's pawns will fall) 24. axb4 Rxb4 makes a tactical difference, as the black rook being on b4 instead of b8 is significantly more problematic for Black compared to the lines that could have happened in the game. After 25. Bxf7 d3+ 26. Kh2 d2 27. Re3 Qxc2 28. e6 d1=Q 29. Rxd1 Qxd1 30. e7 Black's back rank is now too weak: 30. ... Rbb8? fails to 31. Qxb8!! Rxb8 32. e8=Q+ Rxe8 33. Rxe8+ Nf8 34. Rxf8 mate.

23. ... Qxb4 24. c5!

Liam immediately opens the diagonal of the bishop.

24. ... Qxc5 25. Qa3!

A very good decision, entering a more pleasant endgame.

Compared with the note to White's 23rd move, Black is OK after 25. Bxf7 d3+ 26. Kh2 d2 27. Re3 Qxc2 28. e6 d1=Q 29. Rxd1 Qxd1 30. e7 Nf6 31. exf8=Q+ Rxf8 because the rook stays on the back rank.

25. ... Qxa3 26. bxa3

Black doesn't have a comfortable way of defending the f7-pawn, and losing it would let the e5-pawn march down the board.

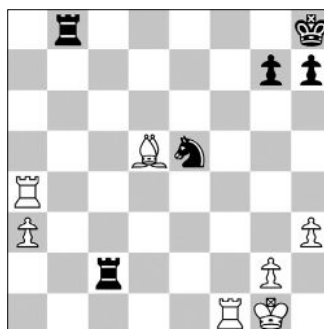
26. ... Rfe8

If 26. ... Kg8 or 26. ... f6, White just plays 27. e6.

27. Bxf7 Rxe5 28. Rd1

Black has managed to trade off the f7-pawn for the e5-pawn, but now the d4-pawn will fall.

28. ... Re2 29. Rxd4 Ne5 30. Bd5 Rxc2 31. Rxa4



Another trade, but now the a4-pawn is gone, and we'll see the strength of the bishop,

as it controls the promotion square a8. Liam shows good technique to convert this endgame.

31. ... Rc5 32. Rb4 Rd8 33. Be4 g6 34. a4

Kg7 35. Rfb1 Kf6 36. Kh2 Rd2 37. Rb6+

Kg5 38. R6b5 Rxb5 39. axb5 Rd4 40. Bf3

Black doesn't have too many good options as the pawn is heading down the board.

40. ... Nxf3+ 41. gxf3 Kf4

The rook endgame is lost as the white rook is perfectly placed behind the passed pawn.

42. b6 Rd2+ 43. Kg1 Rd8 44. b7 Rb8 45.

Kf2 Ke5 46. Kg3 Kd6 47. Kg4 h6 48. h4 Kc7

49. f4 Rxb7 50. Rxb7+ Kxb7 51. h5 gxh5+

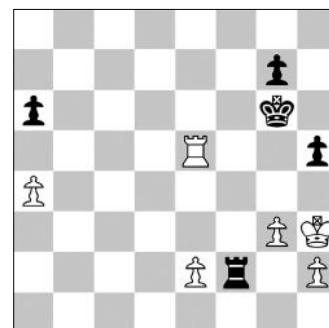
52. Kxh5, Black resigned.

Making noise

The breakout star of the tournament was 18-year-old WGM Zoey Tang, who scored 5/9 playing a field that included four GMs and three IMs.

She faced all three winners of the tournament and went undefeated, with a win against Christopher and draws against Arman and Liam, and only missed out on her last IM norm because she wasn't paired with enough foreign players. I feel like I am doing a disservice to her tournament by featuring one of her two losses, against another of our young talented female players, IM Alice Lee, but I found the endgame so interesting and instructive that I felt that it deserves deep analysis. Zoey has provided her own analysis (see page 37-38) of her win against Christopher.

ENDGAME MINI-COLUMN

IM Alice Lee (2498)**WGM Zoey Tang (2390)****National Open (8), 06.14.2026**

WHITE TO MOVE

42. g4

A way to free the white king, which is stuck defending the h2-pawn.

42. ... Kf6?

This intermezzo is, surprisingly, a blunder! Black had to play 42. ... hxg4+ 43. Kg3 Rf5 44. Re4 (44. Re6+ Kf7 45. Rxa6 Re5 should end in a draw) 44. ... Rc5 45. Kxg4 a5. Of course, White can push here, but this is closer to a draw than a win.

43. Re4

An easy move to make when one doesn't know that there is a winning continuation. White can force a winning pawn endgame with 43. Kg3!.

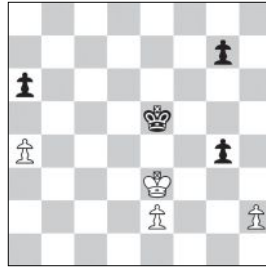
This is a very instructive moment for endgame knowledge, calculation, and considering all options.

If 43. ... Kxe5 (not 43. ... Rf1 44. Rxb5 when White will remain up two pawns) 44. Kxf2 hxg4 the key move is 45. Ke3!. White takes the opposition instead of going after the g-pawns, and Black is essentially down a pawn as her doubled pawns are insignificant.

First, let's look at the alternatives to 45. Ke3!:

If 45. Kg3 Kf5 Black will simply hang on to the pawn — 46. a5 Kg5 47. e3 (47. e4 g6 48. e5 Kf5 49. e6 Kxe6 50. Kxg4 Kf6 is a draw) and now White can try to *zugzwang* Black and force a pawn race, but Black holds: 47. ... Kf5 48. Kh4 Ke4 49. Kxg4 Kxe3 50. Kg5 Kf3!. Black should go for this pawn first. (Not 50. ... Kd4??, when we don't even have to calculate; we can simply count how many moves it takes for Black to capture the a-pawn and promote vs. how many moves it takes for White to capture the g-pawn and promote to see that the race is not close: 51. Kg6 Kc5 52. Kxg7 Kb5 53. h4 Kxa5 54. h5 Kb4

55. h6 a5 56. h7 a4 57. h8=Q.) After 50. ... Kf3! 51. Kg6 Kg4 52. Kxg7 Kh3 53. Kf6 Kxh2 54. Ke5 Kg3 55. Kd6 Kf4 56. Kc6 Ke5 57. Kb6 Kd6 58. Kxa6 Kc7 Black is right on time.



POSITION AFTER 45. Ke3

After 45. Ke3!, we can explore a few moves by Black but they all lead to the same conclusion:

(a) 45. ... g6 46. a5 g5 47. Kd3 Kd5 48. e4+ Ke5 49. Ke3 Ke6 50. Kd4 Kd6 51. e5+ Ke6 52. Ke4 Ke7 53. Kf5 and White will collect both pawns.

(b) White has many ways of winning after 45. ... Kf5 46. Kd4; for example, 46. ... Kf6 47. a5 Ke6 48. Kc5 seems straightforward, and White will have two passed pawns. After 48. ... Ke5 49. Kb6 Kd6 50. Kxa6 Kc6 51. e4 g5 52. e5 one of the pawns will promote.

(c) Perhaps Black's most stubborn defense is 45. ... Kd5, but even so, after 46. Kf4 Kc4 47. e4 Kd4 48. e5 (48. Kf5 g6+ 49. Kf4 a5 50. e5 Kd5 51. Kxg4 transposes) 48. ... Kd5 49. Kf5 a5 50. Kf4 g6 51. Kxg4 White will win the following pawn race. Again, we can count moves instead of calculating: She needs seven moves to collect the g6-pawn and promote, while Black still has to spend time capturing on e5 before running toward the a-pawn: 51. ... Kxe5 52. Kg5 Kd4 53. Kxg6 Kc4 54. h4 Kb4 55. h5 Kxa4 56. h6 Kb3 57. h7 a4 58. h8=Q.

43. ... hxg4+ 44. Kg3 Rf5 45. Rf4 Ke5 46.

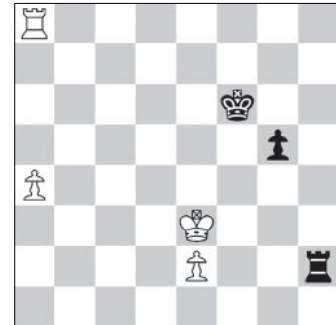
Rxg4

It doesn't make sense to enter the pawn endgame now; the black king is much better positioned after 46. Rxf5+ Kxf5.

46. ... g5 47. Rb4 Rf1 48. Rb6 Re1 49. Kf3

Rf1+ 50. Ke3 Rh1 51. Rxa6 Rxb2 52. Ra5+

Kf6 53. Ra8



We have entered the second instructive and critical moment of the endgame. Black can still hold this but needs to find the only defensive mechanism.

The defense is difficult to find and requires a lot of precision, and of course I relied on the engine to analyze this position. I think this is a great endgame to play out for training and for teaching endgame concepts.

53. ... Rh3+ 54. Kf2 Ra3?

Of course, putting the rook behind the pawn is the most natural way of playing, but as we will see in the game, White has a straightforward winning plan.

The black king has to hide in front of the pawn with 54. ... Kf5!. Compared to what happened in the game, here when White runs the pawn all the way to the seventh



IM Oleksii Bilych



IM Alice Lee



GM Jianchao Zhou

rank, the black king won't be forced to stay on either g7 or h7 and instead can aid in trying to push the passed g-pawn.

From here, play can go 55. a5 Kg4 56. a6 Rh2+! (a key check, forcing the white king to either step back or block the path of the passed e-pawn) 57. Ke3 Rh7 58. a7 Kg3 59. Ke4 (it's easier for Black after 59. Rg8 Re7+ 60. Kd3 Rxa7 61. Rxg5+ Kf4) 59. ... g4 60. Kf5 Rf7+ 61. Ke6 (if 61. Kg6 Re7 62. Kf5 Rf7+ Black is happy to repeat of course, but not 62. ... Rxe2?? 63. Rg8 Ra2 64. a8=Q Rxa8 65. Rxa8 and the white king is too close to the pawn for Black to hope for a draw) 61. ... Rh7!. Now the rook guards the h-file, which will allow the black king to hide there while the g-pawn advances. After 62. e4 Kh3 63. e5 g3 64. Kf6 g2 65. Rg8 Rxa7 each side will give up their rook for the enemy pawn and call it a day.

55. a5

White will now win by running the pawn to

the seventh rank, which will force the black king to run to g7. The black king cannot become active, because White will always threaten to check with the rook and promote the pawn.

55. ... g4

After 55. ... Ke6 Black is on time to get the a-pawn, but will be forced to enter a losing pawn endgame: 56. a6 Kd7 57. a7 Kc7 58. Rg8 Rxa7 59. Rg7+ Kb6 60. Rxa7 Kxa7 61. Kf3 Kb6 62. Kg4 Kc5 63. Kxg5 Kd4 64. Kf4 and the white king is right on time: 64. ... Kd5 65. Kf5 Kd4 66. e4.

56. a6 g3+

56. ... Ke7 57. a7 Kd7 58. Rh8 is the classic skewer idea: 58. ... Rxa7 59. Rh7+ Ke6 60. Rxa7.

57. Kg2 Kg7 58. a7 Kh7 59. e4, Black resigned.

The rook cannot leave the a-file and the

king is restricted to g7 or h7, so no one can stop the e-pawn.

Zoey and Alice have been facing each other for many years, mainly at the U.S. Girls' Junior Invitational, and they faced off again a few weeks after the National Open at the D.C. International.

It was quite unfortunate that Zoey missed out on her norm, but she's back on the road to 2400, which personally I found a bigger hurdle than getting norms.

As for me, I had a decent event. Like last year, I decided to teach the one-day camp and take two byes, which reduced my tournament to only seven games. Overall, I was happy with my games and felt as though I was in good form. Unfortunately, I was unable to convert an opposite-colored bishop endgame with two extra pawns in the last round, which cost me a few rating points and a tie for the U2400 prize. Alas, until next year! ♠



2026 NATIONAL OPEN

AT A GLANCE

JUNE 10-14, 2026 | LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

Open: 1st-3rd: IM Liam Putnam, GMs Christopher Yoo and Arman Mikaelyan, 7/9. 4th-7th: GM Jianchao Zhou, IM Oleksii Bilych, GMs Fidel Corrales Jimenez and GM Viktor Matviishin, 6½/7. **U2300:** Lyubomir Gospodinov, 6½/7. **U2100:** Alex Nguyen, 7/7. **U1900:** David Fujii, 6½/7. **U1700:** Russell Nguyen, 7/7. **U1500:** Jacob Harwin, 7/7. **U1250:** Elijah Levin, Parker Sachs, 6½/7. **Women's Open:** WIM Munkhzul Davaakhuu, WFM Badamkhand Norovsambuu, 4½/5. **Walter Browne Blitz, Open:** GM Christopher Yoo, 10/12. **Walter Browne Blitz, U1900:** Ganchimeg Batasaikhan, Wyatt Backhouse, Aum Menon, 10/12.

For more information and results, visit: www.vegaschessfestival.com/live/results/?YEAR=2026

A Breakout Win

BY **WGM ZOEY TANG**

KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE, SEMI-AVERBAKH SYSTEM (E73)

WGM Zoey Tang (2390)

GM Christopher Yoo (2657)

National Open (2), 06.11.2026

Annotations by WGM Zoey Tang

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6

The KID is a good fighting option for playing for a win with black, albeit quite a risky one. Engines generally disapprove of it, but against humans many dynamic chances are available.

5. Be2 0-0 6. Be3

I like this slightly offbeat setup; White de-

12. cxb5?!

Rolling the pawns forward is too optimistic. After 12. e5?! Nh5 13. dxc6 Ng3 14. Rg1 b4 White's king is stuck near the annoying knight on g3, and Black is better after 12. dxc6? b4 13. Nd5 Nxe4. The best move was the unintuitive 12. a3!, stopping ... b5-b4 to threaten d5xc6. After 12. ... bxc4 13. dxc6 d5 14. e5 Ne4 the only move to keep a slight advantage is 15. g4!.

12. ... cxd5 13. exd5 Nf5 14. 0-0 Ng3?

The attack looks scary, but concretely I'm fine. Of course, when your opponent is a 2600 GM, one tends to doubt this conclusion, but I double-checked my calculation and left the rest to hope.

17. Bc4

Clearing the e2-square for the knight while also guarding d5. But the bishop is even more useful on d3: 17. Bd3 Ngh5 18. f5! forces the trade of light-squared bishops. White's better after 18. ... Bxf5 19. Bxf5 gxf5 20. Rxe7.

17. ... Ngh5 18. Ne2 Ne4 19. Qc1

Chasing the queen away with 19. Rf1 was another option. I thought it looked less clear after 19. ... Qc5 20. Rc1 Bxb2 21. Rc2 Bg7 22. Be1, but it's also very good for White.

19. ... Nh3?

The most logical attacking move, which fails only to a surprising intermezzo. 19. ... Nxd2 20. Qxd2 a6 21. a4 was the best continuation, though it's still sad-looking.

20. Be3 Nxe2 21. Bxf2 Nxc1



White is down a knight; of the two hanging black knights, the one on e4 attacks the hanging bishop on f2. Therefore, the choice should be obvious, right?

22. Bd4!

I didn't see this nice resource until I played 20. Be3. The knight on c1 is completely trapped, so there's no need to worry about regaining material. Black was probably expecting 22. Rxe4?. After 22. ... Bxb2 23. Rxc1 (not 23. Rb1?? Bf5 skewering the rooks) 23. ... Bxc1 24. Rxe7 Bf5 25. Nd4 White has good compensation, with play on the queenside, but no clear advantage at all.

22. ... a6 23. Raxc1?!

A case of being confused by too many good options.

23. Bxg7 was the more precise move order. After 23. ... Kxg7 24. Raxc1 there



lays Ng1-f3, which sometimes allows them to play g2-g4 and directly attack the king.

6. ... Nc6 7. d5 Ne5 8. f4 Neg4 9. Bd2

This loses a tempo, but Black's knight will be forced to h6 soon.

9. ... Nh6 10. Nf3 c6 11. h3

I'd briefly checked this line before the game, but I forgot that the key move here is 11. a4! stopping ... b7-b5. After 11. ... e6 12. dxe6 Bxe6 13. 0-0 d5 14. cxd5 cxd5 15. e5 White's position is pleasant.

11. ... b5!

A move that made a lot of sense as soon as I saw it on the board. Black destabilizes the center.

14. ... Bb7, playing strategically, was simpler. The d5-pawn is lost: 15. Bc4?! is futile after 15. ... Qc7 16. Bb3 Nxd5! 17. Nxd5 Bxd5 18. Bxd5 Qc5+.

15. Re1 Qb6+ 16. Kh2 Qf2



are no ... Ne4-d2 tricks to watch out for, and White's just a pawn up after 24. ... f5 25. a4. 23. Rxe4? allows the knight to escape: 23. ... axb5 24. Bxg7 Kxg7 25. Bxb5 Nb3 taking advantage of the a-file pin. White's still better after 26. Rae1 Rxa2 but not nearly as much.

23. ... axb5 24. Bxb5 Nd2!

I missed this move. The kingside pawns will be doubled, which may not matter immediately but could add up in the future.

25. Bxg7 Nxf3+ 26. gxf3 Kxg7



27. a4?

Careless; my queenside pawns are now weak for one move. 27. a3 was less overextending. After 27. ... Rb8 there's no ... Bc8-a6 available, so now I can play 28. a4.

27. ... Ra7??

During the game I was really hoping he wouldn't play 27. ... Ba6. After 28. Bxa6

(28. Bc6 Rab8 and the queenside pawns are fixed) 28. ... Rxa6 29. b3 Rb6 30. Rc3 Rfb8 only White can play for a win, but it's not clear how to continue.

28. b4

Now the pawns are moving safely in tandem.

28. ... Bf5 29. Rc3 Rb8 30. Kg3 Kf6 31. h4

White is up a pawn with connected passers on the queenside, while Black is stuck defending passively, unable to create a passed pawn. The rest is a matter of technique, which was somewhat nerve-wracking, but I managed sufficiently.

31. ... Bc8 32. Rb1 Bf5 33. Rbc1 e6 34. dxe6 Bxe6 35. Rc7 Raa8 36. Rd1 Bb3 37. Rxd6+ Kg7 38. Rdd7 Rb6 39. Ra7 Rab8 40. Rd3 Be6 41. Rc7 Kh6 42. Rd4 Kg7 43. Rc6 R6b7 44. Rcd6 Rc7 45. Bc6 Rb6 46. b5 Ra7



47. Rb4

47. Rxe6! would have been a cute way to win quicker: 47. ... fxe6 48. Rd7+ and the pawns overwhelm the remaining rook.

47. ... Bf5 48. Rd8 Rc7 49. Rbd4 Rxc6 50. bxc6 Rxc6 51. a5 Rc3 52. Ra4 Bc2 53. Ra2 Bb1 54. Ra1 Be4 55. a6 Rxf3+ 56. Kh2 Rf2+ 57. Kg1 Rg2+ 58. Kf1 Rg4 59. Ra4 A nice trick to preserve a pawn.

59. ... Rxf4+ 60. Kg1 Rg4+

If 60. ... Rxh4? 61. Rxe4 Rxe4 62. a7.

61. Kf2 Rg2+ 62. Kf1 Bc6 63. a7 Rb2 64. a8=Q Bxa8 65. Rdx8 Rb1+ 66. Kf2 Rb2+ 67. Kf3 Rb3+ 68. Kg2 Rb2+ 69. Kg3 Rb3+ 70. Kf4 Rb1 71. Rd4 Kh6 72. Ra7 Kh5 73. Ke3

Not 73. Rxf7?? Rf1+.

73. ... Rb3+ 74. Rd3

White's king is well-placed and Black's pawns are far back, so trading rooks is never a concern.

74. ... Rb6 75. Rxf7 Kxh4 76. Rxh7+ Kg3 77. Ke2+ Kg4 78. Rg7 Ra6 79. Rd4+ Kg3 80. Ke3 Re6+ 81. Re4 Ra6 82. Kd4 Ra4+ 83. Ke5 Ra6 84. Rd4, Black resigned.

My highest-rated win so far! Playing too ambitiously can backfire sometimes, and I'm quite happy with my defensive efforts and subsequent conversion. Even though I didn't end up getting my final IM norm this tournament, I hope I continue to play this way, and better, in the future! ♠



Tang versus Yoo

Tactical TESTS

BY **JOHN HARTMANN**

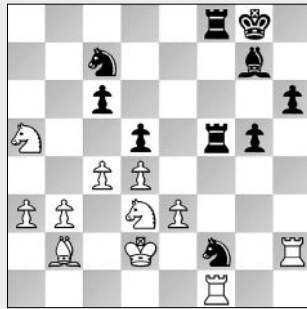
► TRY YOUR HAND AT THESE 12 TACTICS PUZZLES, ALL DRAWN FROM RECENT GAMES. The positions generally increase in difficulty, and you may be faced with a range of tasks including mates, winning material, and defending. Let us know what you think about them with an email to letters@uschess.org. Solutions are on page 63. ♡

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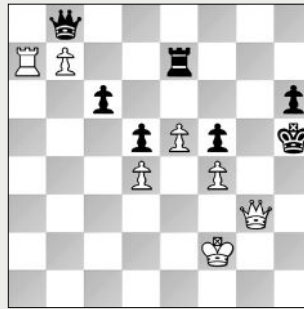
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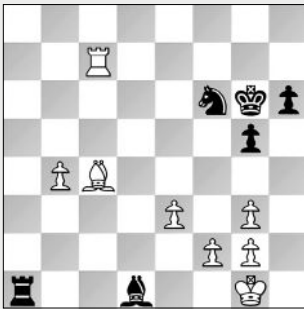
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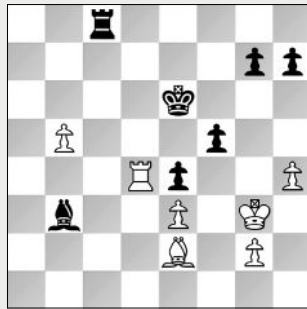
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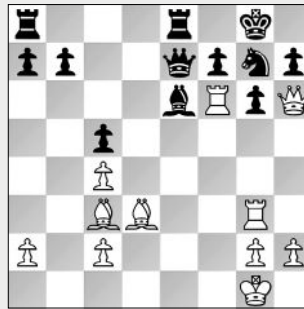
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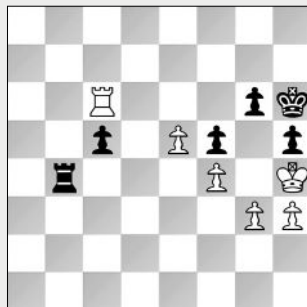
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Windy City Warriors

5 tie for first, 3 earn norms at Chicago Open

BY IM JASON LIANG

M

ORE THAN 900 PLAYERS across eight sections played in the 35th annual Chicago Open, held May 21-25 in Wheeling,

Ill., and going into the fifth round, two players were on top with 4/4.

One of them was no surprise: GM Awonder Liang seemed poised to deliver another dominant performance. The other, however, was 14-year-old Sam Luger, who came into the event with a FIDE rating of 2201 and faced GM Alexey Sarana on Board 1. Even though Luger suffered his first loss, the game was back and forth. Ultimately, though, one blunder in the endgame was all it took for the former 2700 to keep victory within his hands.

KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE (E71)

GM Alexey Sarana (2715)

Sam Luger (2316)

Chicago Open (5), Wheeling,
05.22.2026

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6
5. h3 0-0 6. Be3 Nc6 7. d5 Ne5 8. f4 Ned7
9. Nf3 e6 10. Bd3 exd5 11. cxd5 Re8
12. Qd2 Nc5?!

With the e4-pawn tender, the typical pawn thrust 12. ... b5! was best. After 13. a3 Nc5 14. Bxc5 dxc5 15. e5 b4! the d5-pawn falls, giving Black good play.

13. Bxc5



13. ... Nxe4!?

A good attempt to muddy the waters. Black will have a tough time challenging White's massive center after 13. ... dxc5 14. 0-0-0.

14. Nxe4 f5 15. Nfg5?

Sarana misses a win here, but understandably, as it required finding a long sequence of only moves: 15. Bb5! fxe4 16. Ng5! dxc5 and now the key move is 17. d6!, highlighting the weakened black king. After 17. ... Bd4 18. dxc7! Qe7 19. Bxe8! Qxe8, even here Black still has 20. ... h6 as a threat, so White needs to find the precise 20. Qe2!, which finally consolidates the extra material.

15. ... dxc5 16. Bc4 Qd6!

With the d-pawn blockaded, White's bishop is sitting passively while Black's dark-squared bishop is becoming a monster.

17. 0-0-0 fxe4 18. Rhe1 Bf5?!

Black gets an edge with 18. ... Bh6! highlighting the f4-weakness, which there is no good way to defend: 19. Nxe4 (not 19. g3? Bxg5



IM Jason Liang



Sam Luger

PHOTOS: COURTESY SLCC / OOTES (LIANG), COURTESY NYSICA (LUGER)

20. *fxg5 Bxh3* 19. ... *Qxf4* 20. *Qxf4* (if White tries to get fancy with 20. *Nf6*?? they lose at least a piece after 20. ... *Kf7* thanks to the threat of ... *Qf4xc4*) 20. ... *Bxf4*+ 21. *Kc2 Bf5*.

19. g4 e3 20. Rxe3 Bd4 21. Rb3?

There was no need to leave the center. After 21. *Ree1*! *Bd7* (21. ... *h6* 22. *Ne6 Bxe6* 23. *dxe6* is dominating, with *f4-f5* on the cards next) 22. *Ne4* Black will have to sacrifice an Exchange to stop a decisive *d5-d6* breakthrough.

21. ... *Be4* 22. *Ne6 Bxd5* 23. *Bxd5 Qxd5* 24. *Nxc7 Qc4*+ 25. *Qc2 Qxc2*+ 26. *Kxc2 Re2*+ 27. *Rd2 Rxd2*+ 28. *Kxd2*



Black is close to equalizing, but mustn't choose the wrong rook move.

28. ... Rf8??

Either 28. ... *Rd8* or 28. ... *Rb8* would have kept good drawing chances.

29. Ne6!

White will collect a pawn and use the kingside majority to win.

29. ... *Rf7* 30. *Nxd4 cxd4* 31. *Rf3 h5* 32. *Kd3 hxg4* 33. *hxg4 Rd7* 34. *Ke4 Re7*+ 35. *Kxd4 Re2* 36. *Rb3 b6* 37. *Kd5 Rc2* 38. *a4 Kf7* 39. *Rb5 Ke7* 40. *b3 Rc3* 41. *g5 Kd7* 42. *Kd4 Rf3* 43. *Ke5 Ke7* 44. *Rb4 Re3*+ 45. *Kd4 Rf3* 46. *Kd5 Kd7* 47. *Rd4 Ke7* 48. *b4 Ra3* 49. *Re4*+ *Kd7* 50. *Re6 Rd3*+ 51. *Ke4 Rb3* 52. *Rxg6 Rxb4*+ 53. *Ke5 Rxa4* 54. *Rg7*+ *Kc6* 55. *g6 b5* 56. *Rg8 Kc7* 57. *g7 Ra1* 58. *Rf8 Re1*+ 59. *Kd4*, Black resigned.

Sarana and GM Jianchao Zhou became the new leaders with 4½/5 and drew in their Round 6 matchup. Wins from Awonder, GMs Viktor Matviishen and Harsha Bharthakoti, and Luger (!) allowed them to join the lead.

Luger impressed throughout the event, scoring all his victories against players above 2400 FIDE. What struck me about Luger's play was his ability to play well under time pressure: In virtually all his games, he was left with about one minute by Move 30 to

play 10 moves before the time control. Below is his win against GM-elect Liam Putnam, where slow, controlled play was rewarded.

QUEEN'S PAWN GAME (A50)

Sam Luger (2316)

IM Liam Putnam (2570)

Chicago Open (6), Wheeling,
05.24.2026

1. *Nf3 Nf6* 2. *g3 b6* 3. *Bg2 Bb7* 4. *0-0 g6* 5. *c4 Bg7* 6. *d4 0-0* 7. *Re1 e6* 8. *Nc3 Ne4* 9. *Nxe4 Bxe4* 10. *Bg5 Qe8* 11. *Qd2 d6* 12. *Bh6 Nd7* 13. *Qe3 Bb7* 14. *Rad1 a5* 15. *h4 Nf6* 16. *Bxg7 Kxg7* 17. *Qf4*!?



White allows Black to fork the queenside pawns, but gets to expand quickly in the center in return.

17. ... *Qa4* 18. *a3 Qxc4* 19. *Nd2 Qa6* 20. *e4 Rae8* 21. *e5 Nh5* 22. *Qe3 Bxg2* 23. *Kxg2 f5* 24. *Rc1 Rf7* 25. *Rc6 f4* 26. *Qc3 fxg3* 27. *fxg3 dxe5* 28. *Rxc7 Qa8*+ 29. *Kg1 Ref8*?! Playing for activity, but the *e6*-pawn will be critically weak.

30. Rxf7+ Rxf7

It turns out there is no good way of defending the *e6*-pawn after this move. 30. ... *Kxf7* was perhaps the better option, though exposing the king like this looks unnatural.

31. Rxe5 Nf6 32. Rxe6 Nd5?!

32. ... *a4*! was the most resilient, so Black can meet 33. *Qc6* with 33. ... *Qa5*.

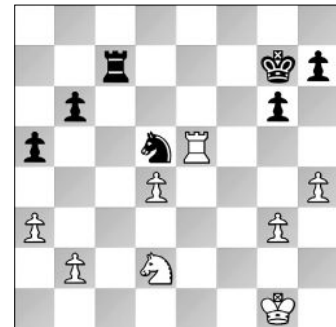
33. Qc6 Qd8 34. Re8?

A safe move to play in time pressure, forcing a queen trade, but Black now gains control of the *c*-file. I like 34. *Nc4*!, shutting down the *c*-file. After 34. ... *Rc7* 35. *Qb5* White has everything under control.

34. ... Qc7 35. Qxc7

Or 35. *Qxd5 Qc1*+.

35. ... Rxc7 36. Re5



It is now vital for Black to keep the knight active and retain counterplay.

36. ... Ne7?

White doesn't have an easy way to progress after 36. ... *Nf6*! 37. *Rb5 Rc2* 38. *Nf3 Ng4*! 39. *Ne5 Ne3* with 40. ... *Rg2*+ and 41. ... *Rd2* on tap.

37. Nf3?!

The best way to convert is 37. *g4*!, keeping black's knight at bay. White can even allow Black's rook to come to *c2* later because he will have active play by pushing the *d*-pawn and/or swinging the knight to *g5* via *f3*.

37. ... Kf6??

Activating the knight with 37. ... *Nf5* is the only way to not get run over: 38. *g4 Nh6* 39. *Re4 Rc2* 40. *d5 Nf7*!.

38. Kf2 Nf5 39. Re2?

39. *g4*! works here thanks to the tactical idea 39. ... *Nxd4* 40. *g5*+!.

39. ... Rd7??

Missing 39. ... *h5*!! cementing the knight and possibly saving the game.

40. g4!!

From here on out, Luger puts on the end-game clinic.

40. ... Nd6

Not 40. ... *Nxd4* 41. *Rd2*.

41. *Kg3 Nc4* 42. *a4 Nd6* 43. *Kf4 Rc7* 44. *Ng5 Rd7* 45. *Re6*+ *Kg7* 46. *b3 h6* 47. *Nf3 Rf7*+ 48. *Ke3 Rf6* 49. *Rxf6 Kxf6* 50. *Nd2 h5* 51. *Ne4*+, Black resigned.

Sarana was the only player with five points to win in Round 7, and recaptured the sole lead. Meanwhile, Awonder, perhaps surprisingly, took another zero-point bye before coming back to play the final two rounds. He had won all his games, but he'd still given up two full points, which meant his chances at first place were slim.

Zhou and Matviishen pulled off important victories in Round 8 to join Sarana atop the standings at 6½/8. Six players were on their tails at 6/8, hoping to get a piece of the big prize with a win in the final round. Two players from that group prevailed — last year's winner GM Semen Khanin, and your author.

Khanin showed no mercy against his formidable opponent, GM Emilio Cordova. He steamrolled pawns and sacrificed a piece to launch a devastating attack against Cordova's king.

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE, FISCHER VARIATION (E44)

GM Semen Khanin (2696)

GM Emilio Cordova (2574)

Chicago Open (9), Wheeling,
05.25.2026

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e3 b6 5. Nge2 Ne4 6. Bd2 Nxd2 7. Qxd2 Bb7 8. a3 Be7 9. d5 0-0 10. g4

White makes his intention clear: a huge kingside attack.

10. ... a5 11. 0-0-0 Na6 12. f4 exd5 13. cxd5 Re8

A bit slow. Time is of the essence, and after 13. ... b5! 14. Nxb5 Nc5 15. Qc2 c6 White will have to shift gears to defend against Black's queenside play.

14. Nd4 Bf8 15. g5 Nc5 16. h4 c6 17. h5 b5 18. dxc6

18. Qc2 was objectively better, but in any

case, the position is about to explode.

18. ... dxc6 19. Qc2 b4??



A brave move, but the pawn on b5 was keeping White's bishop out of c4. Black had better chances with 19. ... Qc7! 20. g6 (if 20. Nf5 Rad8 Black will follow with ... Bb7-c8 and White's weaknesses will start showing) 20. ... Rxe3 when it is not clear where White's attack is.

20. Bc4??

Too fast! The win was there with 20. g6!! Qf6 (20. ... bxc3 21. gxf7+ Kxf7 22. Bc4+) 21. Na4! (21. Bc4 Kh8 is less clear) 21. ... Nxa4 (21. ... b3 22. Nxb3 Nxa4 23. gxf7+ Kxf7 24. Bc4+ Re6 25. Nd4 wins the house) 22. gxf7+! and White wins lots of material: 22. ... Kxf7 (22. ... Qxf7 23. Bc4) 23. Bc4+ Ke7 24. Nf5+.

20. ... bxc3??

Returns the favor. It was an absolute must to neutralize White's attack with 20. ... Ba6!!.. It is far from obvious to the human eye, but Black is now winning: 21. Ba2 Rxe3 22. Nf5 Rd3 nicely illustrates how one side can go

from attacking to being attacked.

21. g6 cxb2+ 22. Kb1 Re4 23. gxf7+ Kh8 24. Nf3 Qf6



How does White continue the attack?

25. Nh4!!

There is no good way to stop White from putting the knight on g6 and crashing through.

25. ... g5 26. Ng6+ Kg7 27. fxg5! Qxg5 28. Rdg1 Qxe3 29. h6+ Kf6 30. Qxb2+ Qd4 31. Rf1+ Kxg6 32. Rhg1+ Kh5 33. Rf5+ Kxh6 34. Rf6+, Black resigned.

Attacking the castled king was also key in my game against GM Francesco Sonis.

GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

IM Jason Liang (2540)

GM Francesco Sonis (2629)

Chicago Open (9), Wheeling,
05.25.2026



Sarana (L) faces off with the world champ in 2025

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. c3 Nf6 5. d3 d6 6. 0-0 a5 7. Re1 0-0 8. h3 h6 9. d4 Ba7 10. Bb3 Re8 11. Bc2 Bd7 12. a4 Qc8



This looked artificial to me during the game, so I called my opponent's bluff to sac on h3 by continuing with my plan.

13. Na3 exd4?!

Black setup doesn't make much sense if they don't play 13. ... Bxh3. Now after 14. gxh3 Qxh3 15. Nb5 (15. Nh2 exd4 16. Qf3 Qh4 with full compensation thanks to the activity) 15. ... Ng4 16. Nxa7 Re6! 17. Nxc6 bxc6 18. Bf4 exf4 19. e5 I manage to halt Black's attack, but the position remains double-edged.

14. cxd4 Nb4 15. Bb1 d5 16. e5 Ne4 17. Nb5 Bb6 18. Nc3

Now I was happy with my position, as there is no good way to deal with the threat on e4. Activating the rook with 18. Ra3!? was even stronger.

18. ... f5 19. exf6 e.p. Nxf6 20. Rxe8+ Qxe8 21. Ne5 c5?



This looks like a logical way to generate counterplay, but now the d5-pawn is weakened. Instead, 21. ... Qe7 is still fairly solid for Black.

22. Bg6! Qd8 23. Bf7+ Kf8

23. ... Kh8 24. Bxh6! reveals how strong my attack is: After 24. ... gxh6 25. Qc1! Kg7 26. Qb1! I am crashing through on g6. If 26. ... Ne4 27. Bxd5.

24. Qf3 cxd4 25. Nxd5 Be8



After 25. ... Nbxtd5 26. Bxd5, in addition to Ne5-g6+ and Bd5xb7 there is now the sneaky threat of Qf3-a3+ to deal with.

26. Nxb6!

26. Qxf6?! was extremely tempting (26. ... gxf6 27. Bxh6 mate), but style points don't necessarily lead to victories. After 26. ... Qxf6 27. Nxf6 gxf6 28. Bxh6+ Ke7 29. Bxe8 Kxe8 the game is far from over.

26. ... Qxb6 27. Qb3

Threatening mate in one and preventing any black knights from coming to d5.

27. ... g5 28. Bxe8 Kxe8 29. Qf7+ Kd8 30.

Bd2 Nbd5 31. Re1

With all my pieces in the game, Black's king is toast.

31. ... Kc8 32. Nd7 Nxd7 33. Re8+ Kc7 34.

Rxa8 Qxb2 35. Bxa5+ Kd6 36. Re8 Nc3 37. Qe6+, Black resigned.

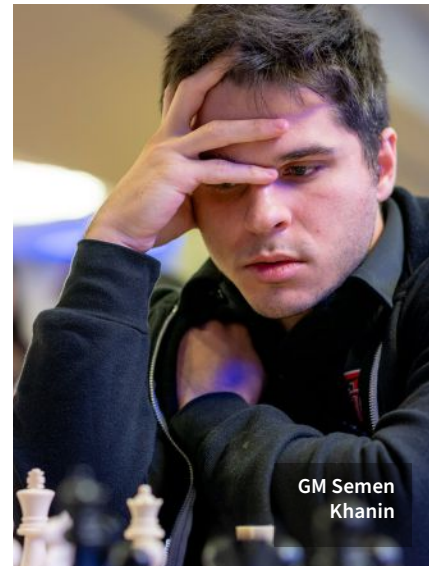
With this win, I clinched my first Swiss GM norm, finally gaining the GM title in the process.

Sam Luger's 6/9 was also good for a GM norm — in fact, his GM norm was guaranteed before Round 8 even started! Similarly, James Chirilov made an IM norm with two rounds to spare, scoring 5/7 including three wins against GMs.

This was certainly a breakthrough event for many players, including Awonder, whose US Chess rating crossed 2800 for the first time after scoring 6½/7 in the games he played! Meanwhile, draws on Boards 1 and 2 allowed Khanin and me to join Sarana, Zhou, and Matviishen in first with 7/9. Each of the five of us pocketed \$3,960 for our efforts. ♠



GM Jianchao Zhou



GM Semen Khanin

2026 CHICAGO OPEN AT A GLANCE MAY 21-25, 2026 | WHEELING, ILLINOIS

OPEN: GMs Alexey Sarana, Jianchao Zhou, Viktor Matviishen, and Semen Khanin; IM Jason Liang, 7/9. **U2300:** Roman Rychkov, FM Arvind Jayaram, 6/7. **U2100:** Amarsaikhan Dashtogtokh, 6½/7. **U1900:** Nathan Scott Frommelt, 6½/7. **U1700:** Alex Lleal Parker, 6½/7. **U1500:** Noah Horner, 6½/7. **U1300:** Dennis A Seibel, 6½/7. **U1000:** Liam Murray, 7/7.

For complete results, visit chessevents.com/event/chicagoopen.

The Fischer Legacy

An interview with IM John Donaldson

BY BRIAN KAREN

INTernational Master John Donaldson is a renowned chess historian and one of the world's leading authorities on Bobby Fischer. A key figure in American chess for decades, Donaldson captained the U.S. national team to Olympiad gold in 2016 and directed the historic Mechanics' Institute Chess Club for 20 years.

In this interview, the author of *Bobby Fischer and His World* and the newly released *Inside the Mind of Bobby Fischer* shares the fruits of his exhaustive research — offering rare insights into Fischer's lost games, his complex psychology, and the myths that still surround the 11th World Champion.

The inspiration for this interview came from discussions in the Chess Book Collectors Facebook group, which I founded. More than 50,000 chess readers, writers, and publishers from around the world come

together to share new finds and talk about their favorite tomes. Some questions for Donaldson came from group members.

Interested parties can join the Chess Book Collectors group at www.facebook.com/groups/454058311291889.

You are credited with tracking down numerous lost Fischer games. What is the most important Fischer game you've found? Were all the games from the Targ collection eventually released after its sale to the World Chess Hall of Fame?

Not all the games from the Targ collection have been released yet, including two from the Fischer-Matulovic training match held just prior to the 1958 Interzonal. These "unknown" games were played from 1955 to 1958, and the quality of play in many of them, particularly from 1955, is not very high. They are historically important in

that they offer a window into how Fischer progressed from a Class B player to a candidate for the world championship in roughly three years.

What are the most important Fischer games that we have still not been able to track down? Are there any game scores you feel we are close to obtaining?

Considering Bobby had already won five U.S. Championships, it is surprising that we only have a fragment of the game between Bobby and Miro Radojcic played in the last round of the 1963 New York State Open. The first 15 moves are only known because Fischer included them in a note to his game with Arthur Bisguier in *My 60 Memorable Games* (Game 45). We know from Frank Brady's report in the *Poughkeepsie Journal* the game went 33 moves. I am not optimistic the missing 18 moves will surface.



PHOTO: COURTESY SLCC / OOTES

Fischer was very upset when he lost the contents of his storage locker in the late 1990s. He seemed to particularly miss the scoresheets from his 1971 simul tour of Argentina, which have yet to surface. One can only hope they are with a private collector and were not thrown out.

1972 AND THE WILDERNESS YEARS

In his 1972 interview with Johnny Carson, Bobby admitted to feeling a massive letdown the day after beating Spassky. Do you think this immediate sense of emptiness contributed to his refusal to defend his title three years later?

Fischer had a goal to become the world champion and he achieved it. He was the strongest player in the world as early as 1970 but could easily have never worn the crown. Looking back at Bobby's triumphant run through the World Championship cycle, it is easy to believe it was inevitable. It was not. Many off-the-board details had to go right and it was a bit of a miracle everything fell into place. I am not surprised he did not defend his title.

The release of the BBC documentary *This Little Thing with Me and Spassky* revealed high-quality footage that was previously unknown. Do you believe there is still a substantial amount of film sitting in storage lockers waiting to be released?

Are you aware of any specific interviews, such as the Larry Evans clips in Liz Garbus's film for ABC on the 1972 match, that have never been fully seen?

I am not aware of any big interview that has yet to surface, but would not be surprised to learn of one. I recently watched and enjoyed the Serbian documentary *A Requiem for Bobby Fischer*. It came out in 2010 and includes not only interviews with Svetozar Gligoric, Boris Ivkov, Alexandar Matanovic, Dragoljub Velimirovic and Milunka Lazarevic, but also plenty of footage of Bobby I had not seen before. It's free (with ads) on Tubi.

Fischer famously told Mike Wallace that he liked to crush a man's ego. Do you believe this desire to psychologically break opponents carried over into a form of sadism in his interpersonal dealings with those who tried to help him?

I am not sure I am qualified to answer this

question, but I don't think it was sadism. Reading Petra Dautov's book (*The Real Bobby Fischer: A Year with the Chess Genius*), the manuscript of Shernaz Kennedy's recently published work and Helgi Olafson's *Bobby Fischer Comes Home*, I come away with the conclusion that Bobby was not well equipped to deal with the minutiae of everyday life.

Fischer could be demanding of his managers. International Master Anthony Saidy witnessed interactions between Bobby and Claudia Mokarow up to the summer of 1978. He believes the Mokarow family move from California to Texas in the late 1980s was based primarily on a need to put some distance between Fischer and Claudia.

Do you believe Bobby ever truly accepted that Nemenyi was his biological father, and therefore that he was fully Jewish?

I do. Bobby would have been too young (age

Fischer would greatly benefit from the tools that are available today, especially considering his tremendous capacity for work.

2 or 3) to remember Paul (or Pal in Hungarian) Nemenyi when the latter was teaching at what is today known as Washington State University, in Pullman, around 1944. Regina, Bobby, and Joan lived there at the same time. A few years later they separated, but in 1949 the Fischer family moved to New York, a few hours train ride from where Nemenyi was living outside of Washington D.C. Bobby met Nemenyi around this time or a year or two later, according to Frank Brady in *Endgame*. He may have been introduced to Bobby as his uncle. Fischer would have been somewhere between ages 6 to 9 — certainly old enough to have lasting memories and possibly to figure out what was what. Subsequently, Nemenyi's other son, Peter, contacted the Fischer family after his father died in 1952.

What I take away from all this is, firstly, Nemenyi was possibly not good with kids or at least not interested in raising them (Peter

was shipped away at an early age). Secondly, even though Regina was a free spirit, in 1943 public norms being what they were, she needed a name on the birth certificate for the father. It is interesting she put down her estranged husband, Gerhardt Fischer, who had been out of her life for five years.

I believe Nemenyi's wife died in England in the late 1930s, but am not certain of this. If so, it would suggest that Paul and/or Regina did not want to get married. Bobby could not have felt good about the situation and it may have weighed heavily on him all his life.

Bobby's knowledge of his father's background is unknown. Nemenyi was an accomplished physicist and mathematician who came from a distinguished and wealthy Jewish family that was prominent in Hungary going back several generations. The family's art collection included works by Klimt, Kandinsky, and Matisse.

Do you think Bobby believed Jinky Young was his daughter, without ever learning about the DNA evidence proving otherwise?

I do not know but it seems clear Bobby wanted to have children.

Bobby claimed with certainty that the first Karpov-Kasparov match (among others) was pre-arranged and that he had boxes of analysis proving it. Did you ever find traces of this specific analysis or meet anyone who saw it?

Pre-arrangement is a strong term, and it is unlikely the two K's fixed games in their matches. Having said that, the two often agreed to short draws, particularly in their first match. This is not illegal. Sometimes both players find this an agreeable outcome, particularly if the player with White lost the previous game and wants to regain their footing. Bobby did not think short draws were proper for a sporting event and cheated the spectators. Short games without a fight were a rarity in Fischer's career. ...

Bobby claimed after the 1962 Candidates that the Soviets colluded and it turned out Petrosian, Keres and Geller had made a pact to make energy-saving draws with each other. While this was perhaps not technically illegal, it could have rebounded had one of the other players in the competition got off to a swift start. It was certainly not sportsmanlike.

LEGACY AND MODERN CHESS

Fischer claimed in later years to hate standard chess, yet GMs Helgi Olafsson and Peter Leko have said he continued to study it despite never intending to play officially again. Do you believe he genuinely hated standard chess or was this a defense mechanism because he knew he could no longer compete at his 1972 level?

I do not think Bobby hated the game, but he certainly disliked the explosive growth of opening theory due to the increasing use of computers. What is not clear are his views on the use of tablebase to find the ultimate truth in certain endgames.

Fischer popularized increment time controls and Fischer Random. Do you think he receives too little credit for these innovations, and would he be upset that his name is rarely attached to increment time controls today and that Fischer Random has been renamed Chess960 or freestyle chess?

Fischer certainly deserves partial credit as an early pioneer, but I believe David Bronstein's name should also be included in this conversation, as he was proposing a similar idea even earlier than Bobby.

Hikaru Nakamura, Fabiano Caruana, and Levon Aronian have recently stated that if they could play any player from the past, it would be Bobby Fischer, describing him as the first player comparable to current top players and noting they would be curious to see how he holds up. Do you agree that Fischer was the first truly modern player, and how do you think he would fare against today's elite grandmasters?

Fischer would greatly benefit from the tools that are available today, especially considering his tremendous capacity for work. Today, top players are hard pressed to gain any advantage from the opening. This would not be a problem for Bobby, but it might for Kasparov, who relied on a terrific opening punch.

Kasparov argued in his books that Fischer retired because he recognized Karpov's strength. There are many other possible explanations for Fischer's retirement, including that he had achieved his goal, felt he had nothing left to prove, and wanted to move on with his life. What are your thoughts on this topic?

When Bobby sat down to play, he feared no one. Away from the board, things were more complicated. As mentioned earlier, I

believe Fischer was clearly the best player in the world in 1970-72. That said, it was something of a miracle everything worked out and he became world champion. Once Bobby achieved this aim the odds of his defending his title were slim.

What was Bobby's favorite chess book in the 1950s?

Questions of Modern Chess Theory by Lipnitsky, which was published in 1956. This was Bobby's Bible and almost certainly the inspiration for his adopting the Ragozin Defense (1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 d5 4. Nc3 Bb4).

Everyone knows the Game of the Century. Is there another Fischer game you feel is criminally underrated and deserves to be mentioned alongside his most famous brilliancies?

I have always been fascinated with two games that to my mind are closely linked together. One of them is well known: Fischer – Myagmarsuren, Sousse Interzonal 1967. The other, Bisguier – Fischer, Bay City 1963, is best remembered for Bobby's opponent supposedly having had to waken him in the middle of the game (Fischer is said to have stayed up the previous night playing blitz for stakes until dawn).

In both games, Fischer is playing a King's Indian Attack formation, and in each he moves his a-pawn one square to stop his opponent from advancing their a-pawn to the sixth rank to gain c3 or c6 for their knight.

Fischer, in his notes to his game with Myagmarsuren in *Boys' Life*, remarks he spent 15 minutes before playing 13. a3, a move that was considered heresy as it ignored the time-honored rule to not play on the side of the board where the opponent is stronger.

I would like to ask Fischer the following two questions: Did he know about this idea (advancing the a-pawn) before his game with Bisguier or did he discover it at the board? If so, why did he spend 15 minutes thinking about the advance in a similar position in his game with Myagmarsuren? The idea of whether to advance the a-pawn is a tough strategic decision and it would be a challenge to make the decision based solely on calculation.

If you could go back to 1972 and ask Bobby Fischer one question immediately after he won the World Championship, what would you ask him?

How long did it take you to appreciate the virtues of 1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 a6 5. Nc3 Nc6 6. Be3 Nf6 7. Bd3 d5,

which worked so well in the last game of the match? Did you instantly understand that after 8. exd5 exd5 9. 0-0 Bd6 10. Nxc6 bxc6 the game had essentially transposed to a position from an old-fashioned line in the Scotch (1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 exd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 Bb4 6. Nxc6 bxc6 7. Bd3 d5 8. exd5 cxd5)?

You've also done extensive research on Akiba Rubinstein. It occurs to me that Fischer and Rubinstein share striking similarities: a quest for objective truth, hypersensitivity to sound, meticulous opening analysis, excellent endgame play, a deceptively simple yet deeply thematic style, and mental health struggles. Am I on the right track with this comparison?

You are right; there are many similarities between Fischer and Rubinstein, and yet I cannot ever recall Bobby mentioning his great predecessor. Steinitz was a huge influence on Fischer as was Capablanca, but not Rubinstein, though he may have influenced Bobby's play in Game 6 of the World Championship (especially the sequence 19. Nxe6 and 20. e4). Rubinstein adopted this treatment in several of his masterpieces.

There are also differences: Rubinstein started playing chess much later, which affected his play, as he blundered more than other top players. Chess did not come naturally to him as it did Fischer. Rubinstein's play was affected by his mental health struggles after World War I. These struggles did not affect Fischer's play, but then again, he stopped playing at a much earlier age.

QUESTIONS FROM THE GROUP

Ben Johnson writes: "I was quite surprised by the revelation in *Inside the Mind of Bobby Fischer* that some contemporaries considered Bisguier more talented than Fischer. Does John think that is more a praise of Bisguier as a special talent, or merely a reflection of the fact that Fischer was a late bloomer?"

Arthur Bisguier was indeed a great talent who relied heavily on his intuition to find the right move. This was both his blessing and his curse. Content to rely on his gift, the affable Bisguier (or "Biscuits" as he was sometimes called), was unwilling to do the work necessary to realize his potential.

Bobby Fischer, by contrast, was not only an exceptional talent but also a tremendously hard worker, maybe the hardest worker in the history of the game.

Iggy Fayn asks: “Having worked with Fischer’s primary documents as closely as you did, including previously unpublished material, does it change any perception of Fischer, either as a person or as a player?”

Bobby Fischer was resourceful as a young man and had a sense of adventure! The World Chess Hall of Fame has over a dozen letters, sent back and forth between Regina and FIDE President Folke Rogard in the summer of 1959, that speak to how independent the young Bobby was.

Fischer played in Zurich 1959 which ended in early June. This left the young Bobby with two choices with the Candidates starting three months. One might think there was only one option with no events scheduled in the interim — get on a plane and head home. There was only one problem with this. The U.S. Chess Federation had no money budgeted for Bobby’s travel to Yugoslavia for the Candidates and flights were quite expensive. ... Taking this into account, Regina felt Bobby should stay in Europe even if he was only 16 and on his own. The letters have Bobby traveling from Zurich to Dubrovnik, then to Venice by boat and later onwards to Munich. ...

These days there is no way an unaccompanied minor would be allowed to wander around Europe on their own for over two months. This episode also reflects how much things have changed in other ways. Flights and phone calls today are but a fraction of the cost of what they once were.

Mark Hanon wonders: “What part did someone from the Log Cabin chess club play in causing Fischer’s antisemitism? Does it amend his image in any significant way? Does it shed any more light into his chess mind?”

E. Forry Laucks, founder and sponsor of the Log Cabin Chess Club, had an interest in Nazi memorabilia. There are few surviving pictures of the interior of the L.C.C.C., which was in the basement of Lauck’s suburban home. ... Several players who played there, including International Master Anthony Saidy, have said Nazi paraphernalia was present.

Fischer played in several tournaments at the Log Cabin in 1956-57. He was a member of its team which visited Havana in early 1956 and played several matches against

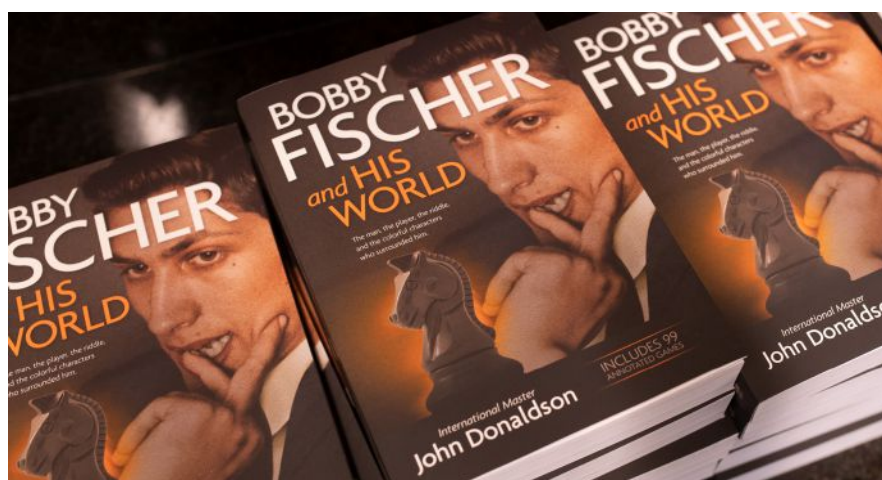
local clubs along the way.

It is possible this led to the antisemitism that afflicted Bobby later in life but I am not sure. True, Bobby was at an impressionable age (12-13 years old) when he participated in the L.C.C.C., but this ignores the many Jewish players that competed in Log Cabin events. One must also consider Laucks was an eccentric figure and recognized as such by the chess community. His work as an organizer and sponsor was appreciated, but all indications are his influence did not extend beyond this.

I do not in any way wish to condone Laucks’s fascination with Nazi memorabil-

ia, but everything I have read suggests his interest did not extend beyond this — i.e. he was not a white nationalist nor a member of some other neo-Nazi organization.

The darkness in Fischer’s life surfaced in the early 1980s in my view, filling the void that emerged after he left the Worldwide Church of God. This theory is based in part on Fischer’s participation in an event held in Israel (Netanya 1968) and his subsequent stay on a kibbutz. If Laucks were a Nazi sympathizer I seriously doubt Regina would have signed herself and Bobby up for a two-week tour with the Log Cabin team in February of 1956. ♠



Fischer,
Skopje 1967

The Brilliancy Prize

GM Evgeny Bareev breaks through in a big way.

BY **BRUCE PANDOLFINI**

T

he brilliancy prize in a tournament is normally awarded for a game that shows outstanding imagination, creativity, and even originality. These contests are often very tactical, featuring sharp play, brilliant combinations, and grand attacks. What's more, they tend to be shorter than many typical victories, often decided in between 20 and 30 moves. This month's offering is a wonderful example: Bareev was awarded the prize for his ingenious play.

FRENCH DEFENSE (C13)

GM Veselin Topalov
GM Evgeny Bareev
Linares, 1994

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Bg5 dxe4
5. Nxe4



Now ensure that the position above is set up on your chessboard. As you play through the remaining moves in this game, use a piece of paper to cover the article, exposing Black's next move only after trying to guess it. If you guess correctly, give yourself the par score. Sometimes points are also awarded for second-best moves, and there may even be bonus points — or deductions — for other moves and variations. Note that ** means

that Black's move is on the next line. **

5. Par Score 4 Be7
Black develops and breaks the pin. You may accept *full credit* for 5. ... Nbd7.

6. Bxf6
This exchange allows White to keep his knight stationed on e4. **

6. Par Score 4 Bxf6
You may accept *full credit* for 6. ... gxf6.

7. c3
White solidifies his d-pawn, while clearing the a4-d1 diagonal for his queen. **

7. Par Score 5 Nd7
Accept *full credit* for either 7. ... 0-0 or 7. ... Be7. The latter retains the two bishops.

8. Qc2
This allows queenside castling, but 8. Nf3 was reasonable. **

8. Par Score 5 e5
A good freeing move. You can accept *full credit* for 8. ... 0-0.

9. dxe5
White might have played 9. 0-0-0, when 9. ... exd4 is met by 10. Nxf6+. **

9. Par Score 5 Nxe5
This is the better way to take back.

10. f4
Topalov drives the knight away. **

10. Par Score 4 Ng6
The position is essentially even. No fireworks yet.

11. g3

White naturally defends his f-pawn, though he does create some weaknesses. **

11. Par Score 5 0-0
The center is open. By castling, Black gets ready to exploit the e-file.

12. Bd3
With this move, White guards the knight and blocks the d-file, hoping to castle. **

12. Par Score 6 Qd5
Preventing queenside castling!

13. a3
Better was simply 13. Nf3, getting ready to castle kingside. **

13. Par Score 6 Nxf4
A bolt from the blue! Now on 14. gxf4, it gets interesting after 14. ... Bh4+.

14. Nxf6+
White could have castled queenside, but then 14. ... Nxd3+ gives Black a winning endgame. **

14. Par Score 4 gxf6

15. Bxh7+
This gets the pawn back, but White is suddenly lost, as Black soon shows. **



ABCs OF CHESS

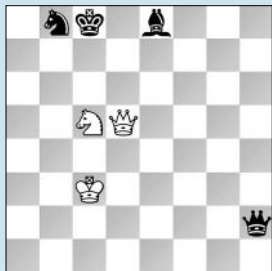
THESE PROBLEMS ARE all related to key positions in this month's game. In each case, White is to move. The answers can be found in Solutions on page 63.

AUGUST EXERCISE:

Here's a good way to get an overview of an instructional book: If the work is truly educational, there are typically lots of enlightening paragraphs that introduce, drive, and summarize. Read these passages through, focusing more on concepts than lines. Then you'll have experienced the sweep of the writer's thinking, and you'll know whether the book is worthy of a more meticulous read.

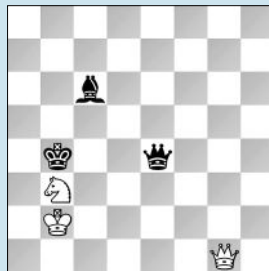
PROBLEM 1

Mating net



PROBLEM 2

Mating net



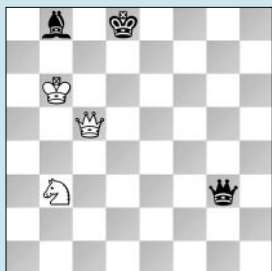
PROBLEM 3

Mating net



PROBLEM 4

Mating net



PROBLEM 5

Mating net



PROBLEM 6

Mating net



15. **Par Score 6**

Kg7

Take **1 bonus point** if you saw that 20. Ke1 is met with 20. ... Nd3+ 21. Kd1 Bg4+. **

16. **Qe4**

It looks like White might be escaping, but Black has a few tricks to unveil. **

16. **Par Score 7**

Re8

An unexpected resource! The surprising pin forces White's hand.

17. **Qxe8 ****

17. **Par Score 7**

Bf5

Another surprise! Black attacks White's queen and grabs control of e4.

18. **Qxa8**

As my teacher used to say to me, a dying man can eat anything. **

18. **Par Score 5**

Qe4+

From this commanding post, various mates are now possible.

19. **Kf2**

If 19. Kf1, then 19. ... Bh3+; if 19. Kd2, then 19. ... Qg2+, with variations similar to what happens in the game. **

19. **Par Score 6**

Qg2+

The white king is forced to walk into no-man's land.

20. **Ke3**

20. **Par Score 5**

Nd5+

21. **Kd4 ****

21. **Par Score 5**

Qd2+

Accept **full credit** for 21. ... Qe4+, which also leads to mate.

22. **Kc5**

On 22. Kc4, Black continues with 22. ... Nb6+. If 23. Kb5 or 23. Kb4, then 23. ... Qxb2 forces mate; and on 23. Kb3, then Black has 23. ... Qd5+, and mate soon results. **

22. **Par Score 6**

Qe3+

This is the best check.

23. **Kc4**

If 23. Kxd5, then 23. ... Be6 is mate. **

23. **Par Score 5**

Nb6+

Mate is in the cards. If 24. Kb5, then 24... Qe5+ 25. Kb4 Qe4+ will mate; if 24. Kb4, then 24. ... Qe4+ right away, and if 24. Kb3, then 24. ... Qe6+ soon mates.

24. **White resigned. ♠**

For more Solitaire Chess, please check out the US Chess Digital Archives: new.uschess.org/chess-life-digital-archives.



POSITION AFTER 23. ... Nb6+

SOLITAIRE CHESS SCORING:

Total your score to determine your approximate rating below

Total Score	Approx. Rating
95+	2400+
81-90	2200-2399
66-80	2000-2199
51-65	1800-1999
36-50	1600-1799
21-35	1400-1599
06-20	1200-1399
0-05	under 1200

Pattern Recognition

A new endgame contains an echo of the past.

BY **GM JOEL BENJAMIN**

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RANDMASTERS WESLEY SO and Vincent Keymer contested a fascinating endgame in the recent Norway Chess tournament.

It was an Armageddon game, a product of the unique protocol of the tournament, and both players did well under the circumstances.

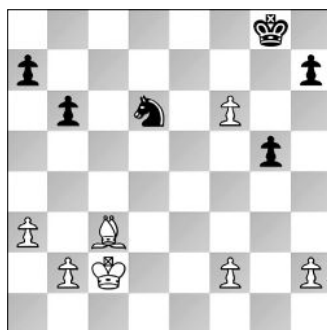
One hidden possibility triggered an interesting memory of a pattern I had come across in my research, which has probably occurred in many other examples. White starts with 10 minutes to Black's seven, with Black collecting the bonus point if the game is a draw.

TO QUEEN OR NOT TO QUEEN?

GM Wesley So (2753)

GM Vincent Keymer (2767)

Norway Chess, 06.02.2026



It's a complex minor piece ending, and the clocks read 4:02-0:31! Keymer understandably opted for an instant move.

32. ... Kf7?

Missing the in-between move 32. ... Ne4, attacking the f2-pawn. After 33. Bd4 Kf7 34. Kd3 Nxf6 Black is safe in the pawn ending.

33. Kd3 Ke6 34. a4 Ne8

Stockfish suggests Black can resist better with 34. ... a6, but such minutiae will not play under the circumstances.

35. Be5

This doesn't spoil anything, but White had two strong options here: 35. Kc4 Nd6+ 36. Kb4 prepares to attack the queenside with a4-a5.

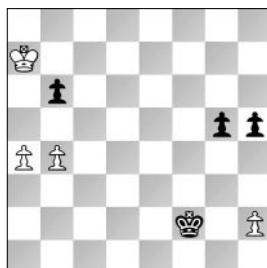
Black can chase the king back with 36. ... a5+, but then his pawns are too vulnerable to White's bishop. White could also ditch his pride and joy — 35. f7 Kxf7 36. Kc4 would force a decisive king invasion.

35. ... h5!

In a split second, Keymer correctly surmises that 35. ... Nxf6 36. Bxf6 Kxf6 37. Kc4 Ke5 38. Kb5 Kf4 39. Ka6 Kf3 40. Kxa7 Kxf2 41. Kxb6 is a move too slow.

36. Kd4?

So loses a critical tempo. Much worse would be 36. Kc4?? Kxe5 37. f7 Nd6+, winning for Black. Only 36. b4! assures the win. It is consistent with a concept we have explored here before: Advancing your pawns on the side where your king will soon start dining can win you the race. Black cannot enter the pawn ending: 36. ... Nxf6 37. Bxf6 Kxf6 38. Kc4 Kf5 39. Kb5 Kg4 40. Ka6 Kf3 41. Kxa7 Kxf2 and now:



POSITION AFTER 41. ... Kxf2

42. b5! is a crusher. At best, Black can limp to a hopeless queen ending after 42. ... g4 43. a5! h4 44. axb6 g3 45. hxg3 h3 46. b7 h2 47. b8=Q h1=Q.

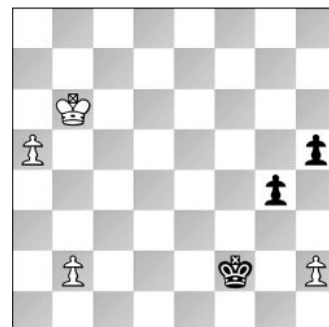
After 36. b4!, 36. ... g4 is also insufficient: 37. f7! Kxf7 38. Bb8 a6 39. Kc4 Ke6 40. b5 a5 41. Ba7 Nd6+ 42. Kd4 Nc8 43. Bb8 and Black's pawns are too vulnerable to offer any hope.

36. ... Nxf6 37. Bxf6 Kxf6 38. Kc4 Kf5

39. Kb5 Kf4 40. Ka6 Kf3

From here on the players received a one-second increment for each move.

41. Kxa7 Kxf2 42. Kxb6 g4 43. a5



43. ... h4?!

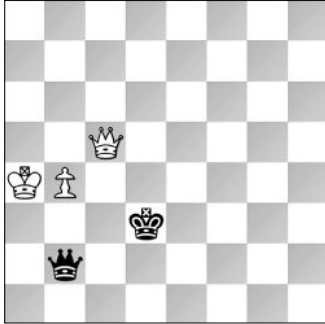
Keymer heads for a queen ending which should be drawn with proper play. But if you have ever watched grandmasters play Q&P v. Q you know the tablebase verdict is not easily achievable under the best of conditions.

With 13 seconds at the outset, Keymer could not pull off this herculean task.

44. a6 g3 45. hxg3 hxg3 46. a7 g2 47. a8=Q g1=Q 48. b4

I might be inclined to centralize the queen with 48. Qe4, but there is something to be said for bringing the pawn close to the queen in time pressure.

**48. ... Ke2+ 49. Kb5 Qg5+ 50. Ka4 Qe5
51. Qg2+ Kd3 52. Qf1+ Kd2 53. Qf2+ Kd3
54. Qc5 Qb2??**



There were five moves, including 54. ... Qe4, that would stay in drawing range.

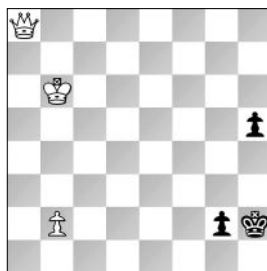
55. b5

55. Qd5+! would force a queen trade, but So's move leaves Black defenseless against the onrushing pawn. Further errors conclude matters quickly.

55. ... Qg7 56. b6 Qg4+ 57. Qb4 Qg7, and Black lost on time.

Returning to the diagram at Move 43, the engine reveals a remarkable resource that Keymer could only have considered with a lot more than 11 seconds left.

It is usually amateur hour to slow down queening by grabbing pawns with the king, but here Black could have achieved a cleaner draw by not promoting his pawn! Black had 43. ... Kg2! 44. a6 Kxh2 45. a7 g3 46. a8=Q g2.



POSITION AFTER 46. ... g2

A variety of factors conspire against White. The placement of the pawn at h5 denies a key checking square at g4. But surely having a bonus pawn on b2 should decide?

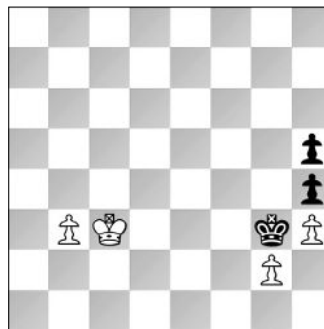
The unfortunate placement of White's king — it blocks the b-pawn, and Black's g-pawn will promote with check — seals the deal: 47. Qb8+ Kh1 48. Qb7 Kh2 49. Qc7+ Kh1 50. Qc6 h4! (50. ... Kh2 51. Qd6+ Kh1 52. Kb5 g1=Q 53. Qd5+ Qg2 54. Qxh5+ Kg1 is still a draw but White has practical chances) 51.

b4 h3 52. b5 Kh2! (52. ... h2?? 53. Qe4 Kg1 54. Qe1 mate) and Black holds.

The alternative ending to So – Keymer is an enhanced version of a game I unearthed for *Liquidation on the Chessboard*. I will back the position up a bit to show how White could have avoided his predicament with a counterintuitive solution.

OLDER RELATION

**IM Luis Santos (2369)
IM Fabio Bruno (2410)
European Senior Ch. 50+ (8), Porto,
2014**



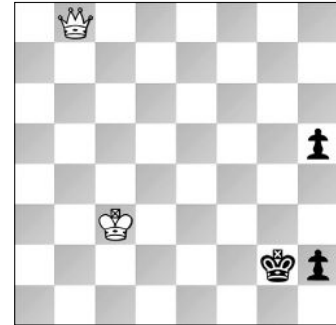
WHITE TO MOVE

64. b4?

White could have won by investing three tempi to box the Black king into the corner:

64. Kd3! Kxg2 65. Ke2 Kxh3 66. Kf3 Kh2 67. Kf2 h3 68. b4 Kh1 69. b5 h2 70. b6 h4 71. b7 h3 72. Kg3 Kg1 73. b8=Q and White wins.

64. ... Kxg2 65. b5 Kxh3 66. b6 Kg2 67. b7 h3 68. b8=Q h2



This is a more basic example of the theme. While the h-pawn is more effective on the seventh rank, the presence of an extra pawn nullifies the stalemate possibilities. But without access to the g4-square, White can't drive the king into the corner. And when he captures the h5-pawn, the stalemate is back on.

**69. Qb7+ Kg1 70. Qb6+ Kg2 71. Qc6+ Kg1
72. Qc5+ Kg2 73. Qg5+ Kf2 74. Qh4+ Kg2
75. Qe4+ Kg1 76. Qg6+ Kf2 77. Qe4 Kg1
78. Qe1+ Kg2 79. Qe2+ Kg1 80. Qe3+ Kg2
81. Qg5+ Kf2 82. Qxh5 Kg2, draw.
83. Qg4+ Kh1 is a dead end. ♠**



They Coulda Been Contenders

Profiles of players lost to history

BY IM JOHN WATSON

T

HE VAST MAJORITY of people involved in any sport or endeavour are, sadly, destined to be forgotten. It's simply a matter of numbers and of how the human mind works. In *Forgotten Talents: Chessplayers Lost in the Labyrinth of Life*, Javier Cordero takes interest in certain players who have been forgotten but deserve to be remembered.

In most cases, either an unlucky condition or a twist of fate intervened to divert these players from greater success, leading them to disappear from the public imagination. For some, economic hardship was simply too great an obstacle, forcing them to neglect the game; for others, poor health prevented them from playing at a reasonable level (or at all). Some players lacked opportunities to advance or played below their capabilities at the one or two precious events that might have attracted sponsorship and invitations. "Almost all the protagonists of this book did not have the goddess of fortune on their side," Cordero says, "Indeed, in some cases it is as though misfortune walked with them every step of the way."

There are 23 profiles with almost 200 selected games. Each of these players was highly talented, most enjoying youthful success. Their periods of triumph varied in length, and several had fairly long careers, often supplementing play with writing and coaching, but none stayed long in the highest echelons. In a few particularly sad cases, young players had dramatic successes and

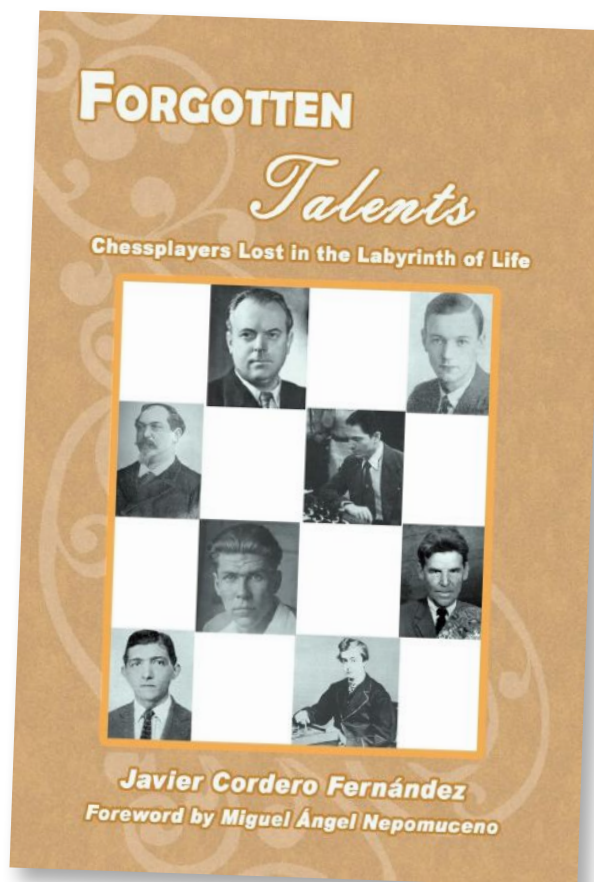
were seemingly destined for the top when brutal setbacks intervened.

For example, Gustav Neumann more than held his own against the world's top players for almost eight years in his 20s (with four match wins over Adolf Anderssen), then came down with a degenerative nerve disorder and had to leave the game. Cecil de Vere succumbed to disease and died at 29. Rudolf Charousek had elite-level results against the world's leading players

in his mid-20s until he contracted tuberculosis and died quickly. Carlos Torre had spectacular results at age 20 and for the several years thereafter, but the sudden onset of mental health problems forced him to quit chess entirely. Similar breakdowns in physical or mental health afflicted the brilliant talents Nikolai Riumin, Alvis Vitolinsh, and Albin Planinc. (In my March 2022 column I looked at two books about Planinc, and another about Viktor Kupreichik, who is also in *Forgotten Talents*). Cordero treats every player with respect, highlighting their cultural surroundings, personalities, and the best of their play while providing a table of results.

I was fascinated by the chapter on Oldrich Duras. I grew up seeing his name in the old tournament books from the early 1900s, but perhaps because he didn't actually win the most famous supertournaments, I had no idea how many first and second places he achieved in leading events between 1906 and 1913, playing against the likes of Lasker, Maroczy, Steinitz, Rubinstein, Schlechter, Marshall, Tarrasch, Reti and many others. I looked at Jeff Sonas' Chessmetrics site

and sure enough, it ranks Duras fourth in the world briefly, and he spent almost three years at number five. Then in 1914 real life intervened: World War I began, and Duras became a full-time soldier. After the war, he retired from chess and worked in the Czech Ministry of Defense for 20 years, never returning to the game. Not a sad story compared to many others, but the label "forgotten" certainly applies.



Nicolas Rossolimo (seated) in an undated photo



Soviet Stars

Cordero devotes a chapter to Rashid Nezhmetdinov, one of the least forgotten of all the players here, despite his up-and-down career. There have been numerous books and pamphlets about his games, and his brilliancies have been published and analyzed again and again over the years. As Cordero points out, Nezhmetdinov's lifetime score against world champions was six wins, five losses, and nine draws!

Several talents from the Soviet Union had personal weaknesses or faced practical real-world obstacles, but nevertheless would not have been forgotten had they played in any other country. Viacheslav Ragozin, Alexander Tolush, and Vladimir Simagin had outstanding results in various top events which included numerous world champions and famous grandmasters. They simply weren't successful enough to stand out in an era filled with such legendary countrymen, and lacked international opportunities. Ragozin was particularly accomplished as the editor of the famous magazine *Shakhmaty v*

SSSR, the author of numerous books and theoretical articles, and a winner of the World Correspondence Championship.

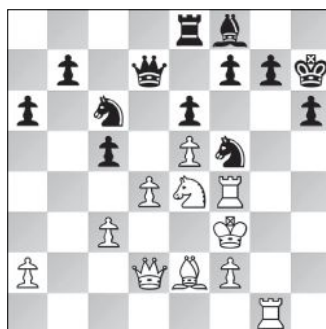
The Americans

Since we're in the pages of *Chess Life*, let me draw your attention to a couple of players from more recent times who lived and played in the U.S. For many American players, Nicolas Rossolimo may be forgotten except for the variation named after him (1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5), but for us old codgers, he's a memorable character indeed. Rossolimo was born in Russia and lived in France for many years, living a nomadic life while competing at a high level. He came to New York at age 42, taking on a number of jobs including cab driver, bellhop, musician, and even the owner of a

chess academy. Rossolimo's reputation was enhanced by some widely published brilliancies. Cordero shows one nice finish I hadn't seen before:

A BURIED CLASSIC

Rossolimo
NN
Paris, 1944



WHITE TO MOVE

1. Rxf5! exf5 2. Qxh6+! Kxh6

If 2. ... gxh6 3. Nf6+ Kh8 4. Rg8 mate.

3. Rh1+ Kg6 4. Kf4! Qe6 5. Rh8!

Mate with 6. Bh5 follows. White resisted the temptation to play 5. Bh5+? Kh7 6. Bxf7+ Qh6+ 7. Ng5+ Kh8 8. Rxh6+ gxh6 9. Bxe8 hxg5+ 10. Kxg5 when Black has equalized.

Elmars Zemgalis was a successful Latvian junior who fled the country during the Soviet occupation in the middle of World War II, settling for some time in Germany. He had spectacular results there, winning numerous tournaments from 1946 through 1950, and then moved to Seattle, where he studied and then worked as a teacher but played chess only sporadically. IM John Donaldson wrote a book about Zemgalis' career.

In *Forgotten Talents*, Cordero includes a section called "The Latvian Exodus," which chronicles a set of players who left Latvia for other lands, particularly during World War II and the decade after. Latvian chessplayers who came to the U.S. include Zemgalis, Val Zemitis (who wrote a two-volume, 800-page book on Latvian chessplayers), Konstantins Grivainis, Leonids Dreibeigs, Aleksandr Liepniks, and many others. The inimitable Viktors Pupols first came to the U.S. in 1950 and is playing in tournaments to this day. The best-known and most successful of these Latvian chess emigres, Grandmaster Edmar Mednis, came to the U.S. in the final year of WWII. Although a strong player and well known for a win versus Bobby Fischer in the U.S. Championship, Mednis is familiar to most players as a writer. For years, young U.S. players were raised on his clearly written and instructive books, especially those on the endgame.

Forgotten Talents was originally published in Spanish in 2020; the Russell Enterprises English edition is translated by Diane Dahl, Eugene Salomon, and Jorge Amador. Author Javier Cordero Fernandez is a tournament organizer and arbiter, and has invested enormous time and effort into a superb website covering the history of chess in Spain up to the present: www.historiadelajedrezspanol.es. *Forgotten Talents* is his labor of love which, in the best traditions of chess historical research, honors the lives and careers of some brilliant chess artists who deserve to be remembered. We're lucky to have Russell Enterprises publishing books like this that preserve the history of our game. ♠

Cordero, Javier. Forgotten Talents: Chessplayers Lost in the Labyrinth of Life. Russell Enterprises, 2024. 288 pp.; ISBN 978-1949859874. \$24.95

Practical TASKS

BY IM ROBERT SHLYAKHTENKO AND MATAN PRILLELTENSKY

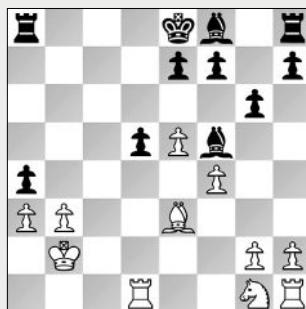
▶ RAY CHENG'S *PRACTICAL CHESS EXERCISES* is one of the most underrated books for amateur players, and with his blessing trainers Matan Prilleltensky and IM Robert Shlyakhtenko are bringing his concept to *Chess Life*. (Look for a book from them with these kinds of problems in the near future.) No hints, no one to tell you you're winning. Just find the best move, whether it's a shot, a defense, or a finesse. Just like at the board. Solutions are on page 63. ♠

POSITION 1.



WHITE TO MOVE

POSITION 2.



WHITE TO MOVE

POSITION 3.



WHITE TO MOVE

POSITION 4.



BLACK TO MOVE

POSITION 5.



WHITE TO MOVE

POSITION 6.



WHITE TO MOVE

POSITION 7.



BLACK TO MOVE

POSITION 8.



WHITE TO MOVE

POSITION 9.



BLACK TO MOVE

TOURNAMENT LIFE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nationals

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT • GRAND PRIX

2026 U.S. G/30 & G/60 National Championship

SEPTEMBER 11-13, 2026 — LATLA# 55780

Site: Lavin Bernick Center, Tulane University
Address: 29 McAlister Drive, New Orleans, LA 70118
Overall Prize Fund: \$6,000 **GP Pts:** 20
FIDE: N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Downriver Chess & Tulane Chess • info@downriverchess.com • downriverchess.com

Grand Prix

The Grand Prix point totals reflect all rated event information as of June 10, 2026, for the 2026 Grand Prix. These standings are updated regularly, but should be considered unofficial. Visit ratings.uschess.org/grand-prix/standings for up-to-date information.

2026 US CHESS GRAND PRIX STANDINGS

Name	State/Ctry	Pts
1. GM JIANCHAO ZHOU	MA	264.00
2. GM JOSE GABRIEL CARDOSO FOR		75.00
3. GM FRANCESCO SONIS	MO	64.00
4. EMMANUEL CARTER	NC	63.00
5. GM ALEXANDER IVANOV	MA	62.00
6. JAMISON EDRICH KAO	CT	51.00
7. GM MARK HEIMANN	CA	48.00
8. GM SEMEN KHANIN	IN	46.00
9. GM B. SUBRAMANIAM H	FOR	45.00
10. IM OLEKSII BILYCH	CA	45.00

The Grand Prix continues in 2026. For information visit new.uschess.org/us-chess-grand-prix-program

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

2nd Annual Dragon Knight Chess Friendship Day Grand Prix

AUGUST 2, 2026 — NC TLA# 57094

Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560
Overall Prize Fund: \$1,228 **GP Pts:** 10
FIDE: N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • jon@dragonknightchess.com • (919) 422-2535 • dragonknightchess.com

GRAND PRIX

Texas State Open Chess Tournament 2026

AUGUST 6-9, 2026 — TX TLA# 57399

Site: Sheraton DFW Airport Hotel **Address:** 4440 West John Carpenter Frwy, Irving, TX 75063
Overall Prize Fund: see online TLA **GP Pts:** 30
FIDE: Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Coppell Chess Club • coppellchessclub@gmail.com • 214-534-6730 • coppellchessclub.com/tournaments/texas-state-open-chess-tournament-aug-2026

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess National Bowling Day Grand Prix

AUGUST 9, 2026 — NC TLA# 57095

Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560
Overall Prize Fund: \$1,228 **GP Pts:** 10
FIDE: N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • jon@dragonknightchess.com • (919) 422-2535 • dragonknightchess.com

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

56th annual Continental Open

AUGUST 13-16, 2026 — MA TLA# 55944

Site: Hilton Boston/Woburn Hotel **Address:** 2

Forbes Road, Woburn, MA 01801 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$30,000 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX

13th Annual Potomac Open

AUGUST 14-16, 2026 — MD TLA# 56612

Site: Rockville Hilton **Address:** 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852
Overall Prize Fund: see online TLA **GP Pts:** 30
FIDE: Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Michael Regan • mregan@stsci.edu • 4104195130 • mdchess.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

16th annual Central California Open

AUGUST 14-16, 2026 — CA TLA# 55857

Site: Doubletree Hotel **Address:** 2233 Cesar Chavez, Fresno, CA 93721
Overall Prize Fund: \$10,000 **GP Pts:** 100
FIDE: Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

12th annual Continental Open Blitz Championship

AUGUST 15, 2026 — MA TLA# 55945

Site: Hilton Boston/Woburn Hotel **Address:** 2 Forbes Road, Woburn, MA 01801
Overall Prize Fund: \$500 **GP Pts:** 10
FIDE: N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

58th annual Atlantic Open

AUGUST 21-23, 2026 — DC TLA# 55858

Site: Omni Shoreham Hotel **Address:** 2500 Calvert St., NW, Washington, DC 20008
Overall Prize Fund: \$30,000 **GP Pts:** 150
FIDE: Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

21st annual Indianapolis Open

AUGUST 21-23, 2026 — IN TLA# 55946

Site: Hilton Garden Inn Indianapolis Airport **Address:** 8910 Hatfield Drive, Indianapolis IN 42641
Overall Prize Fund: \$15,000 **GP Pts:** 100
FIDE: Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX

5th Nashville Summer Classic

AUGUST 21-23, 2026 — TN TLA# 57625

Site: Millennium Maxwell Hotel **Address:** 2025 Rosa L Parks Blvd, Nashville, TN 37228
Overall Prize Fund: \$15,000 **gtd GP Pts:** 60
FIDE: Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Nashville Chess Center • director@nashvillechess.org • 6292544737 • nashvillechess.org/content.aspx?page_id=4091&club_id=164844&item_id=2974224

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

13th annual Atlantic Open Blitz Championship

AUGUST 22, 2026 — DC TLA# 55859

Site: Omni Shoreham Hotel **Address:** 2500 Calvert St., NW, Washington, DC 20008
Overall Prize Fund: \$500 **GP Pts:** 10
FIDE: N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

3rd Annual Dragon Knight Chess National Waffle Day Grand Prix

AUGUST 23, 2026 — NC TLA# 57531

Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:**

NATIONAL EVENTS & BIDS NOW ON USCHESS.ORG Effective with the November 2020 *Chess Life*, we have removed the National Events and Bids page that has traditionally been part of our TLA section. This information continues to be available here:

new.uschess.org/national-events-calendar

For complete details on individual events, please visit [new.uschess.org/node/\[TLA ID\]](https://new.uschess.org/node/[TLA ID]). You will find the event's unique five-digit TLA ID at the end of each TLA.

2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560
Overall Prize Fund: \$1,228 **GP Pts:** 10
FIDE: N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • jon@dragonknightchess.com • (919) 422-2535 • dragonknightchess.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess Frankenstein Day Grand Prix

AUGUST 30, 2026 — NC TLA# 57532

Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560
Overall Prize Fund: \$1,228 **GP Pts:** 10
FIDE: N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • jon@dragonknightchess.com • (919) 422-2535 • dragonknightchess.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 Illinois Open

SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2026 — IL TLA# 55517

Site: DoubleTree by Hilton Lisle-Naperville **Address:** 3003 Corporate W Dr, Lisle, IL 60532
Overall Prize Fund: \$15,000 **GP Pts:** 80
FIDE: Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Wilson's Chess & King Registration • bill@kingregistration.com • kingregistration.com/event/ILopen26

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 Peter P Lahde TN Open and State Championship

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — TN TLA# 56592

Site: Memphis Downtown Holiday Inn AND Memphis Chess Club **Address:** 160 Union Ave, and 195 Madison Avenue, respectively, Memphis, TN 38103
Overall Prize Fund: \$10,000 **GP Pts:** 80
FIDE: N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Memphis Chess Club • info@memphischessclub.com • 9015013257 • memphischessclub.com/tournaments

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 Michigan Open

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — MI TLA# 57124

Site: Courtyard by Marriott **Address:** 11 Monroe Ave NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503
Overall Prize Fund: \$5,100 **GP Pts:** 40
FIDE: Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Michigan Chess Association • jeffchess64@gmail.com • 810-

955-7271 • michess.org

GRAND PRIX

2026 Southern California Open

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — CA-S TLA# 57008

Site: Hilton Los Angeles North/Glendale **Address:** 100 West Glenoaks Blvd., Glendale, CA 91202
Overall Prize Fund: \$60,000 **GP Pts:** 200
FIDE: N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Armen Ambartsoumian • americanchessacademy@gmail.com • coachsamtd@gmail.com • onlineregistration.cc/tournaments/index.php?txn=y9Dg4A%3D%3D&view=zt7g2Q-%3D%3D&act=ven&tid=m6ignw%3D%3D

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

148th annual New York State Championship- America's oldest annual tournament!

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — NY TLA# 55860

Site: Albany Marriott Hotel **Address:** 189 Wolf Road, Albany, NY 12205
Overall Prize Fund: \$18,000 **GP Pts:** 80
FIDE: Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX

2026 Fall Southeastern FIDE

SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2026 — NC TLA# 55302

Site: Hilton Garden Inn - Southpark **Address:** 4808 Sharon Road, Charlotte, NC 28210
Overall Prize Fund: \$5,000 **GP Pts:** 30
FIDE: Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Charlotte Chess Center • events@charlottechesscenter.org • charlottechesscenter.org/events

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 New Jersey Open

2026 Awards

\$12,500 in cash prizes

First Prize \$5,000

2nd: \$2,500	3rd: \$1,000
4th: \$900	5th: \$800
6th: \$700	7th: \$600
8th: \$500	9th: \$300
10th: \$200	

PLEASE NOTE DEADLINE FOR PRINT TLA SUBMISSIONS

TLAs appearing in *Chess Life* must be uploaded online on the 10th, two months prior to the issue cover date in which the ad is to appear. (For example, October TLAs must be uploaded no later than August 10th.) TLAs uploaded past this deadline cannot be published without special approval by US Chess.

SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2026 — NJ TLA# 57573
Site: Delta Hotel Woodbridge **Address:** 515 US Highway 1 South, Iselin, NJ 08830 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$10,250 **GP Pts:** 80 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** New Jersey State Chess Federation • tournaments@njscf.org • njscf.org/2026-nj-open/

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • REGIONALS

85th New England Open

SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2026 — MA TLA# 57128
Site: Renaissance Framingham Hotel and Conference Center **Address:** 11657 Worcester Rd., Framingham, MA 01701 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$4,300 **GP Pts:** 30 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Massachusetts Chess Association • info@masschess.org • masschess.org

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 Michigan Speed Championship

SEPTEMBER 5, 2026 — MI TLA# 57125
Site: Courtyard Grand Rapids Downtown **Address:** 11 Monroe Ave NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$600 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Michigan Chess Association • jeffchess64@gmail.com • 810-955-7271 • michess.org

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 Harvey Lerman Florida State Championship

SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2026 — FL TLA# 53516
Site: Hilton Melbourne at Rialto Place **Address:** 200 Rialto Place, Melbourne, FL 32901 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$16,000 **GP Pts:** 60 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Space Coast Chess Foundation, Inc. • andrea2@yahoo.com • 412-418-1591 • spacecoastchessfoundation.org/event/floridastatechampionship

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess At Least 14 Grand Prix

SEPTEMBER 6, 2026 — NC TLA# 57539
Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$532 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • jon@dragonknightchess.com • (919) 422-2535 • dragonknightchess.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

12th annual New York State Blitz Championship!

SEPTEMBER 6, 2026 — NY TLA# 55862
Site: Albany Marriott Hotel **Address:** 189 Wolf Road, Albany, NY 12205 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$800 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX

Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss 26

SEPT. 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55953
Site: Holiday Inn Express & Suites **Address:** 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$4,800 **b/60 GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** John McCumiskey • sactochess@sbcbglobal.net • 916-524-9479 • sacramentochessclub.org

GRAND PRIX

2026 Sacramento Senior Championship SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55952

Site: Holiday Inn Express & Suites **Address:** 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$3,300 **b/40 GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** John McCumiskey • sactochess@sbcbglobal.net • 916-524-9479 • sacramentochessclub.org

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Dragon Knight Chess At Least 15 Grand Prix

SEPTEMBER 13, 2026 — NC TLA# 57540
Site: Dragon Knight Chess Center **Address:** 2000 Bearcat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville, NC 27560 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$532 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Dragon Knight Chess • jon@dragonknightchess.com • (919) 422-2535 • dragonknightchess.com

GRAND PRIX

Beckstead Family Classic 2026

SEPTEMBER 18-20, 2026 — MOTLA# 55384
Site: Saint Louis Chess Club **Address:** 4663 Maryland Avenue, St. Louis MO 63108 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,000 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Saint Louis Chess Club • tournaments@saintlouischessclub.org • 3143612437 • saintlouischessclub.org

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 PA State Game/60 Championship - West

SEPTEMBER 19, 2026 — PA TLA# 56740
Site: William Pitt Union, Univ. of Pittsburgh **Address:** 5th Ave. & Bigelow Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15213 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$695 **GP Pts:** 6 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Tom M Martinak • martinak_tom_m@hotmail.com • 412-908-0286 • pscfchess.org/clearinghouse

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

CFCC 2026 Autumn Open & Scholastic

SEPTEMBER 25-27, 2026 — FL TLA# 57109
Site: Delta Hotels Marriott Orlando Celebration **Address:** 2900 Parkway Boulevard, Kissimmee, FL 34747 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$9,000 **GP Pts:** 40 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Central Florida Chess Club (CFCC) • storchnoi@gmail.com • (407) 312-6237 • centralflchess.org/cfcc-2026-autumn-open-and-scholastic-weekend-tournament

GRAND PRIX

Catherine McLaughlin Rapid Open 2026

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — MO TLA# 55387
Site: Saint Louis Chess Club **Address:** 4663 Maryland Avenue, St. Louis MO 63108 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,000 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Saint Louis Chess Club • tournaments@saintlouischessclub.org • 3143612437 • saintlouischessclub.org

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

CFCC 2026 Autumn Open Saturday Night Open Blitz

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — FL TLA# 57110
Site: Delta Hotels Marriott Orlando Celebration **Address:** 2900 Parkway Boulevard, Kissimmee, FL 34747 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$500 **GP Pts:** 10 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Central Florida Chess Club (CFCC) • storchnoi@gmail.com • (407) 312-6237 • centralflchess.org/cfcc-2026-autumn-open-and-scholastic-weekend-tournament

HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

43rd Annual Reno Western States Open

OCTOBER 2-4, 2026 — NV TLA# 57101
Site: J Resort Casino Hotel **Address:** 345 N. Arlington Avenue, Reno NV 89501 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$27,500 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Jerome V. Weikel • wackykykl@aol.com • 775-747-1405 • renochessclub.org

GRAND PRIX

1st Azeri Chess Academy Open

OCTOBER 5-10, 2026 — TX TLA# 56866
Site: Houston Chess Studio **Address:** 250 Patton Street, Suite H, Houston, TX 77009 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$12,500 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Azeri Chess Academy LLC • info@azerichessacademy.com • azerichessacademy.com/tournaments/1st-azeri-chess-academy-open

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

34th annual Midwest Class Championships

OCTOBER 9-11, 2026 — IL TLA# 56700

Site: Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel **Address:** 1 Bradley Airport, Windsor Locks, CT 06096 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$17,000 **GP Pts:** 100 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX

5th Skyline Open

OCTOBER 9-12, 2026 — VA TLA# 57329
Site: Washington Dulles Airport Marriott **Address:** 45020 Aviation Drive, Dulles, VA 20166 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$10,000 **GP Pts:** 80 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Eastern Chess Association • easternchessdirector@gmail.com • 7574162075 • easternchess.com

GRAND PRIX • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

2026 Michigan Bottom Half Class Championships

OCTOBER 10-11, 2026 — MI TLA# 57126
Site: Wyndham Garden Ann Arbor **Address:** 2900 Jackson Ave, Ann Arbor, MI 48103 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$2,575 **GP Pts:** 15 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Michigan Chess Association • jeffchess64@gmail.com • 810-955-7271 • michess.org

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

Lafayette Open 2026

OCTOBER 10-11, 2026 — LA TLA# 58119
Site: Discovery Inn and Suites **Address:** 120 E Kaliste Saloom Rd, Lafayette, LA 70508 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,600 **GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Tommy LeBlanc • 337-981-1821 • lafanettechessclub.org

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

34th annual Eastern Class Championships

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — CT TLA# 56702
Site: Sheraton Hartford Hotel **Address:** 601 North Milwaukee Ave., Wheeling, IL 60090 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$20,000 **GP Pts:** 120 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX

4th Gulf Coast October Open

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
Site: Embassy Suites by Hilton **Address:** 10450 Corkscrew Commons Drive, Estero, FL 33928 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$10,000 **GP Pts:** 50 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Boca Raton Chess Club • jon@bocachess.com • 561-302-4377 • bocachess.com

HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

30th annual Eastern Chess Congress

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — NJ TLA# 56703
Site: Westin Princeton at Forrestal Village Hotel **Address:** 201 Village Blvd, Princeton, NJ 08540 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$25,000 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

2026 Fredericksburg Open

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 56767
Site: Country Inn & Suites Fredericksburg-South **Address:** 10358 Patriot Highway, Fredericksburg, VA 22408 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$4,500 **GP Pts:** 20 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Michael E Hoffpauir, NTD/IA/SI • mhoffpauir@aol.com • 7578464805 • vachess.org

GRAND PRIX

20th Annual SPICE Cup Open

NOVEMBER 4-9, 2026 — WA TLA# 57647
Site: Hilton Bellevue **Address:** 300 112th Ave SE, Bellevue, WA 98004 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$12,500 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Josh Sinanan • WashingtonChessFederation@gmail.com • 206-769-3757 • spicecup64.com

tonChessFederation@gmail.com • 206-769-3757 • spicecup64.com

GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

21st annual Los Angeles Open

NOVEMBER 6-8, 2026 — CA TLA# 56845
Site: Hilton Orange County Airport Hotel **Address:** 18800 Macarthur Blvd, Irvine CA 92612 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$20,000 **GP Pts:** 120 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

35th annual Kings Island Open

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — OH TLA# 56847
Site: Embassy Suites Cincinnati NE **Address:** 4554 Lake Forest Dr, Blue Ash OH 45242 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$25,000 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX

Thanksgiving Open 2026

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Site: Saint Louis Chess Club **Address:** 4663 Maryland Avenue, St. Louis MO 63108 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$10,000 **GP Pts:** 120 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Saint Louis Chess Club • tournaments@saintlouischessclub.org • 3143612437 • saintlouischessclub.org

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

57th annual National Chess Congress

NOVEMBER 27-29, 2026 — PA TLA# 56849
Site: Loews Hotel **Address:** 1200 Market St, Philadelphia, PA 19107 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$45,250 **GP Pts:** 200 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX

2026 Saint Louis Chess Club Championship

DECEMBER 18-20, 2026 — MO TLA# 55385
Site: Saint Louis Chess Club **Address:** 4663 Maryland Avenue, St. Louis MO 63108 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$5,000 **GP Pts:** 40 **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Saint Louis Chess Club • tournaments@saintlouischessclub.org • 3143612437 • saintlouischessclub.org

HERITAGE EVENT • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

51st annual Eastern Open

DECEMBER 26-29, 2026 — VA TLA# 56880
Site: Hyatt Regency Crystal City **Address:** 2799 Richmond Highway, Arlington VA 22202 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$30,000 **GP Pts:** 150 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

HERITAGE EVENT • AMERICAN CLASSIC • GRAND PRIX • ENHANCED GRAND PRIX • JUNIOR GRAND PRIX

36th annual North American Open

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084
Site: Horseshoe Casino Resort (formerly Bally's) **Address:** 3645 Las Vegas Blvd. S, Las Vegas, NV 89103 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$130,000 **GP Pts:** 300 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Continental Chess • director@chess.us • chesstour.com

GRAND PRIX

\$10K Guaranteed Ken Ferguson Memorial Open

JANUARY 16-18, 2027 — LA TLA# 55902
Site: Sheraton New Orleans Hotel **Address:** 500 Canal, New Orleans, LA 70130 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$10,000 **GP Pts:** 40 **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Downriver Chess & Tulane Chess • info@downriverchess.com • downriverchess.com

Regional

ALABAMA

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — TN TLA# 56592
2026 Peter P Lahde TN Open and State Championship
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
4th Gulf Coast October Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

ALASKA

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

ARIZONA

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55953
Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #26
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55952
2026 Sacramento Senior Championship
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 6-8, 2026 — CA TLA# 56845
21st annual Los Angeles Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084
36th annual North American Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

ARKANSAS

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — TN TLA# 56592
2026 Peter P Lahde TN Open and State Championship
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

CALIFORNIA

AUGUST 14-16, 2026 — CA TLA# 55857
16th annual Central California Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — CA-S TLA# 57008
2026 Southern California Open
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55953
Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #26
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55952
2026 Sacramento Senior Championship
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 6-8, 2026 — CA TLA# 56845
21st annual Los Angeles Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084
36th annual North American Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

COLORADO

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084
36th annual North American Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

CONNECTICUT

AUGUST 13-16, 2026 — MA TLA# 55944
56th annual Continental Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2026 — NY TLA# 57527
12th Annual New York State Magnus High School and Junior High Chess League: Season 12 Kickoff!
See New York.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — CT TLA# 56702
34th annual Eastern Class Championships
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-15, 2026 — NY TLA# 57478
10th Annual New York State Girls Championship!
See New York.

DELAWARE

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 57677
2026 Fredericksburg Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 21-22, 2026 — DE TLA# 57406
Delaware Capital Open
Site: Delaware Agricultural Museum Address: 866 North DuPont Hwy, Dover, DE 19901 Overall Prize Fund: \$1,500 GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Delaware Chess Association • aa.legolas@gmail.com • 410-219-3179 • delawarechessassociation.org

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

MARCH 13-14, 2027 — DE TLA# 57324
New Castle County Delaware State Championship
Site: Ramada Inn Address: 280 Chapman Road, Newark, DE 19702 Overall Prize Fund: \$1,500 GP Pts: \$3,600 FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Delaware Chess Association • aa.legolas@gmail.com • 410-219-3179 • delawarechessassociation.org

DIST. OF COLUMBIA

AUGUST 21-23, 2026 — DC TLA# 55858
58th annual Atlantic Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

AUGUST 22, 2026 — DC TLA# 55859
13th annual Atlantic Open Blitz Championship
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — VA TLA# 57655
Scholastic Tournament at the Meadowdale Public Library
See Virginia.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — VA TLA# 57656
Quads at the Meadowdale Public Library
See Virginia.

OCTOBER 9-12, 2026 — VA TLA# 57329
5th Skyline Open
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
4th Gulf Coast October Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

FLORIDA

SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2026 — FL TLA# 53516
2026 Harvey Lerman Florida State Championship
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 25-27, 2026 — FL TLA# 57109
CFCC 2026 Autumn Open & Scholastic
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — FL TLA# 57110
CFCC 2026 Autumn Open Saturday Night Open Blitz
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
4th Gulf Coast October Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

GEORGIA

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — TN TLA# 56592
2026 Peter P Lahde TN Open and State Championship
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
4th Gulf Coast October Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

HAWAII

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

IDAHO

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55953
Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #26
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55952
2026 Sacramento Senior Championship
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

ILLINOIS

AUGUST 21-23, 2026 — IN TLA# 55946
21st annual Indianapolis Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

2026 - 43rd Annual Reno-Western States Open

An American Classic & Heritage Event!

Oct 2-4 & Oct 3-4 (3-day & 2-day schedules)
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NEW LOCATION: J RESORT CASINO HOTEL, RENO, NV
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7:30P GM de Firmian - Simul (\$20); 7:30P Blitz Tourney (\$25)
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INFO: Email wackykl@aol.com or Web: www.renochess.org

SEE TLA on page 56

SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2026 — IL TLA# 55517
2026 Illinois Open
 See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — TN TLA# 56592
2026 Peter P Lahde TN Open and State Championship
 See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 9-11, 2026 — IL TLA# 56700
34th annual Midwest Class Championships
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
4th Gulf Coast October Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — OH TLA# 56847
35th annual Kings Island Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

INDIANA

AUGUST 21-23, 2026 — IN TLA# 55946
21st annual Indianapolis Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2026 — IL TLA# 55517
2026 Illinois Open
 See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — TN TLA# 56592
2026 Peter P Lahde TN Open and State Championship
 See Grand Prix.

SEPT. 26-27, 2026 — OH TLA# 57495
Golden Buckeye Senior Open
 See Ohio.

OCTOBER 9-11, 2026 — IL TLA# 56700
34th annual Midwest Class Championships
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 10, 2026 — KY TLA# 57373
The Butch Mosby Chess Classic 2
 See Kentucky.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — OH TLA# 56847
35th annual Kings Island Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

IOWA

SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2026 — IL TLA# 55517
2026 Illinois Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

KANSAS

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

KENTUCKY

AUGUST 21-23, 2026 — IN TLA# 55946
21st annual Indianapolis Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — TN TLA# 56592

2026 Peter P Lahde TN Open and State Championship
 See Grand Prix.

SEPT. 26-27, 2026 — OH TLA# 57495
Golden Buckeye Senior Open
 See Ohio.

OCTOBER 10, 2026 — KY TLA# 57373
The Butch Mosby Chess Classic 2
 Site: Roots101 Museum Address: 124 North 1st Street, Louisville, KY 40202 Overall Prize Fund: \$4,000 b/64 teams GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: Y Residency: N Org: Corbin Seavers • urbanlouisvillechess@yahoo.com • 5023656369

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — OH TLA# 56847
35th annual Kings Island Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

LOUISIANA

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — TN TLA# 56592
2026 Peter P Lahde TN Open and State Championship
 See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 10-11, 2026 — LA TLA# 58119
Lafayette Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

JANUARY 16-18, 2027 — LA TLA# 55902
\$10K Guaranteed Ken Ferguson Memorial Open
 See Grand Prix.

MAINE

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

MARYLAND

AUGUST 21-23, 2026 — DC TLA# 55858
58th annual Atlantic Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 9-12, 2026 — VA TLA# 57329
5th Skyline Open
 See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
4th Gulf Coast October Open
 See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — NJ TLA# 56703
30th annual Eastern Chess Congress
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 57677
2026 Fredericksburg Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-29, 2026 — PA TLA# 56849
57th annual National Chess Congress
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 26-29, 2026 — VA TLA# 56880
51st annual Eastern Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

MASSACHUSETTS

AUGUST 13-16, 2026 — MA TLA# 55944
56th annual Continental Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

AUGUST 15, 2026 — MA TLA# 55945
12th annual Continental Open Blitz Championship
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2026 — MA TLA# 57128
85th New England Open
 See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — CT TLA# 56702
34th annual Eastern Class Championships
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
4th Gulf Coast October Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

MICHIGAN

SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2026 — IL TLA# 55517
2026 Illinois Open
 See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — MI TLA# 57124
2026 Michigan Open
 See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 5, 2026 — MI TLA# 57125
2026 Michigan Speed Championship
 See Grand Prix.

SEPT. 26-27, 2026 — OH TLA# 57495
Golden Buckeye Senior Open
 See Ohio.

OCTOBER 10-11, 2026 — MI TLA# 57126
2026 Michigan Bottom Half Class Championships
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — OH TLA# 56847
35th annual Kings Island Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

MINNESOTA

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

MISSISSIPPI

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

AUGUST 22, 2026 — MS TLA# 57351
2026 Mississippi State Women's Championship
 Site: Nissan Training Center Address: 300 Nissan Dr. - Gate 1, Canton, MS 39046 Overall Prize Fund: n/a GP Pts: n/a FIDE: N Accessible: N Residency: N Org: Mississippi Chess Association • mark@mcchess.org • 615-631-3876 • mcchess.org

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — TN TLA# 56592
2026 Peter P Lahde TN Open and State Championship
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

MISSOURI

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — TN TLA# 56592
2026 Peter P Lahde TN Open and State Championship
 See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — MO TLA# 55387
Catherine McLaughlin Rapid Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 18-20, 2026 — MO TLA# 55385
2026 Saint Louis Chess Club Championship
 See Grand Prix.

MONTANA

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

NEBRASKA

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

NEVADA

AUGUST 14-16, 2026 — CA TLA# 55857
16th annual Central California Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55953
Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #26
 See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55952
2026 Sacramento Senior Championship
 See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 2-4, 2026 — NV TLA# 57101
43rd Annual Reno Western States Open
 See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 6-8, 2026 — CA TLA# 56845
21st annual Los Angeles Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084
36th annual North American Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
 See Grand Prix.

NEW JERSEY

AUGUST 13-16, 2026 — MA TLA# 55944
56th annual Continental Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

AUGUST 14-16, 2026 — MD TLA# 56612
13th Annual Potomac Open
 See Grand Prix.

AUGUST 21-23, 2026 — DC TLA# 55858
58th annual Atlantic Open
 See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

AUGUST 29, 2026 — NJ TLA# 54720
Hamilton Chess Club Quads
 Site: Edward McManimon building Address:

320 Scully Ave., Hamilton, NJ 08610 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$25/quadrant **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Edward J Sytnik • edmendou@aol.com • 6093512437 • hamiltonchessclub.com

SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2026 — NJ TLA# 57573
2026 New Jersey Open
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2026 — NY TLA# 57527
12th Annual New York State Magnus High School and Junior High Chess League: Season 12 Kickoff!
See New York.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — CT TLA# 56702
34th annual Eastern Class Championships
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
4th Gulf Coast October Open
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — NJ TLA# 56703
30th annual Eastern Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 57677
2026 Fredericksburg Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-15, 2026 — NY TLA# 57478
10th Annual New York State Girls Championship!
See New York.

NOVEMBER 27-29, 2026 — PA TLA# 56849
57th annual National Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 26-29, 2026 — VA TLA# 56880
51st annual Eastern Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NEW MEXICO

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084
36th annual North American Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NEW YORK

MONTHLY ON SAT. — NY TLA# 56202
Buffalo Chess Association Open Swiss
Site: Buffalo Chess Association **Address:** 6043 Transit Rd., #101b, East Amherst, NY 14051 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$200+ **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Buffalo Chess Association • thebuffalochessassociation@gmail.com • (716)243-2719 • buffalochessassociation.com

AUGUST 13-16, 2026 — MA TLA# 55944
56th annual Continental Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

AUGUST 21-23, 2026 — DC TLA# 55858
58th annual Atlantic Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — NY TLA# 55860
148th annual New York State Championship—America's oldest annual tournament!
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2026 — NJ TLA# 57573

2026 New Jersey Open

See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 6, 2026 — NY TLA# 55862
12th annual New York State Blitz Championship!
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2026 — NY TLA# 57527
12th Annual New York State Magnus High School and Junior High Chess League: Season 12 Kickoff!
Site: Columbia Grammar and Prep., High School Library **Address:** 4 West 93rd Street, New York, NY 10025 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$800 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Chess Center of New York • director@magnusleague.org • www.chesscenter.cc

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — CT TLA# 56702
34th annual Eastern Class Championships
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
4th Gulf Coast October Open
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — NJ TLA# 56703
30th annual Eastern Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 57677
2026 Fredericksburg Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

NOVEMBER 14-15, 2026 — NY TLA# 57478
10th Annual New York State Girls Championship!
Site: Columbia Grammar and Preparatory School **Address:** 4 West 93rd Street, New York, NY 10025 **Overall Prize Fund:** \$1,000 **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Chess Center of New York • director@chessgirls.win • 347-201-2269 • chessgirls.win

NOVEMBER 27-29, 2026 — PA TLA# 56849
57th annual National Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 26-29, 2026 — VA TLA# 56880
51st annual Eastern Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NORTH CAROLINA

AUGUST 2, 2026 — NC TLA# 57094
2nd Annual Dragon Knight Chess Friendship Day Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

AUGUST 9, 2026 — NC TLA# 57095
Dragon Knight Chess National Bowling Day Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

AUGUST 14-16, 2026 — MD TLA# 56612
13th Annual Potomac Open
See Grand Prix.

AUGUST 23, 2026 — NC TLA# 57531
3rd Annual Dragon Knight Chess National Waffle Day Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

AUGUST 30, 2026 — NC TLA# 57532
Dragon Knight Chess Frankenstein Day Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2026 — NC TLA# 55302
2026 Fall Southeastern FIDE
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 6, 2026 — NC TLA# 57539
Dragon Knight Chess At Least 14 Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 13, 2026 — NC TLA# 57540
Dragon Knight Chess At Least 15 Grand Prix
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — VA TLA# 57655
Scholastic Tournament at the Meadowdale Public Library
See Virginia.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — VA TLA# 57656
Quads at the Meadowdale Public Library
See Virginia.

OCT. 9-12, 2026 — VA TLA# 57329
5th Skyline Open
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
4th Gulf Coast October Open
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 57677
2026 Fredericksburg Open
See Grand Prix.

NOV. 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

DEC. 26-29, 2026 — VA TLA# 56880
51st annual Eastern Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NORTH DAKOTA

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

OHIO

AUGUST 21-23, 2026 — IN TLA# 55946
21st annual Indianapolis Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

SEPT. 26-27, 2026 — OH TLA# 57495
Golden Buckeye Senior Open
Site: Salt Fork State Park Lodge **Address:** 11073 Natural Resources 3 Road, Kimbolton, OH 43749 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Grant Neilley • grant@neilley.com • 6143141102 • neilley.com/chess

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — OH TLA# 56847
35th annual Kings Island Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

OKLAHOMA

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

OREGON

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55953
Sacramento Chess Club Weekend Swiss #26
See Grand Prix.

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55952
2026 Sacramento Senior Championship
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084
36th annual North American Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

PENNSYLVANIA

AUGUST 21-23, 2026 — DC TLA# 55858
58th annual Atlantic Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

SEPTEMBER 4-7, 2026 — NY TLA# 55860
148th annual New York State Championship—America's oldest annual tournament!
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

SEPTEMBER 19, 2026 — PA TLA# 56740
2026 PA State Game/60 Championship - West
See Grand Prix.

SEPT. 26-27, 2026 — OH TLA# 57495
Golden Buckeye Senior Open
See Ohio.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
4th Gulf Coast October Open
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — NJ TLA# 56703
30th annual Eastern Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 57677
2026 Fredericksburg Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 14-15, 2026 — NY TLA# 57478
10th Annual New York State Girls Championship!
See New York.

NOVEMBER 27-29, 2026 — PA TLA# 56849
57th annual National Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 26-29, 2026 — VA TLA# 56880
51st annual Eastern Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

PUERTO RICO

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

RHODE ISLAND

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

SOUTH CAROLINA

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519
4th Gulf Coast October Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

SOUTH DAKOTA

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MOTLA# 55381
Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

TENNESSEE

AUGUST 21-23, 2026 — TN TLA# 57625

5th Nashville Summer Classic
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

TEXAS

AUGUST 6-9, 2026 — TX TLA# 57399

Texas State Open Chess Tournament 2026
See Grand Prix.

AUGUST 28-29, 2026 — TX TLA# 57389

Lufkin Piney Woods Open
Site: Lufkin Parks and Recreation **Address:** 500 E. Kerr Ave, Lufkin, TX 75901 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** N **Residency:** N **Org:** Rita Paxton Frenzel • ilufkinchess@gmail.com • 2146979886

OCTOBER 5-10, 2026 — TX TLA# 56866

1st Azeri Chess Academy Open
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519

4th Gulf Coast October Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084

36th annual North American Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

UTAH

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

VERMONT

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

VIRGINIA

AUGUST 14-16, 2026 — MD TLA# 56612

13th Annual Potomac Open
See Grand Prix.

AUGUST 21-23, 2026 — DC TLA# 55858

58th annual Atlantic Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

HERITAGE EVENT • STATE CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2026 — VA TLA# 57313

87th Virginia Closed

Site: Hilton Garden Inn Innsbrook **Address:** 4050 Cox Road, Glen Allen, VA 23060 **Overall Prize Fund:** see online TLA **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Michael E Hoffpauir • mhoffpauir@aol.com • 7578464805 • vachess.org

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — VA TLA# 57655

Scholastic Tournament at the Meadowdale Public Library

Site: Meadowdale Public Library **Address:** 4301 Meadowdale Blvd, North Chesterfield, VA 23234 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Michael E Hoffpauir, NTD/IA/Sl • mhoffpauir@aol.com • 7578464805 • vachess.org

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 — VA TLA# 57656

Quads at the Meadowdale Public Library

Site: Meadowdale Public Library **Address:** 4301 Meadowdale Blvd, North Chesterfield, VA

23234 **Overall Prize Fund:** see online TLA **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** N **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N

Org: Michael E Hoffpauir, NTD/IA/Sl • mhoffpauir@aol.com • 7578464805 • vachess.org

OCTOBER 9-12, 2026 — VA TLA# 57329

5th Skyline Open

See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — NJ TLA# 56703

30th annual Eastern Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 27-29, 2026 — PA TLA# 56849

57th annual National Chess Congress
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

DECEMBER 26-29, 2026 — VA TLA# 56880

51st annual Eastern Open

See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

WASHINGTON

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2026 — CA-N TLA# 55952

2026 Sacramento Senior Championship
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 4-9, 2026 — WA TLA# 57647

20th Annual SPICE Cup Open

See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 7-8, 2026 — WA TLA# 57649

21st Susan Polgar Foundation National Open for Girls and Boys

Site: Hilton Bellevue **Address:** 300 112th Ave SE, Bellevue, WA 98004 **Overall Prize Fund:** n/a **GP Pts:** n/a **FIDE:** Y **Accessible:** Y **Residency:** N **Org:** Josh Sinanan • WashingtonChessFederation@gmail.com • 206-769-3757 • spfn.com

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026

See Grand Prix.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2026 — NV TLA# 57084

36th annual North American Open
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

WEST VIRGINIA

SEPT. 26-27, 2026 — OH TLA# 57495

Golden Buckeye Senior Open
See Ohio.

OCTOBER 23-25, 2026 — VA TLA# 57677

2026 Fredericksburg Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

WISCONSIN

SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2026 — IL TLA# 55517

2026 Illinois Open
See Grand Prix.

OCTOBER 9-11, 2026 — IL TLA# 56700

34th annual Midwest Class Championships
See Grand Prix or chessevents.us.

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026 — FL TLA# 57519

4th Gulf Coast October Open
See Grand Prix.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

WYOMING

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2026 — MO TLA# 55381

Thanksgiving Open 2026
See Grand Prix.

36th annual NORTH AMERICAN OPEN

Dec 26-30, 26-29 or 27-29, 2026, Las Vegas - GM/IM norms possible!
\$130,000 PRIZE FUND UNCONDITIONALLY GUARANTEED!

Open Section: 9 rounds, Dec 26-30 only, 40/90, SD/30; d30.

Lower sections: 7 rounds, Dec 26-29 or 27-29, 40/90, SD/30; d30 (3-day option, rds 1-2 G/60 d10).

A USCF Heritage Event!

At Horseshoe Casino Resort, 3645 Las Vegas Blvd South, Las Vegas NV 89103. Free parking.

In 8 sections. Open Section uses December FIDE ratings, other sections Dec, official USCF ratings. Top 3 sections are also FIDE rated.

A USCF American Classic!

Open Section: \$10000-5000-3000-2000-1300-1000-800-700-600-500, clear/tiebreak win \$300 bonus, top FIDE U2400/Unr \$3000-2000-1000, 300 GPP.

Under 2300, Under 2100, Under 1900: Each \$7000-4000-2000-1200-800-600-500-500-400-400.

Under 1700: \$6000-3000-1500-1000-800-600-500-500-400-400.

Under 1500: \$5000-2500-1300-1000-700-600-500-400-300-300.

Under 1300: \$4000-2000-1000-800-600-500-400-400-300-300.

Under 1000: \$1500-1000-600-400-300-300-200-200-200.

Prize limits: 1) Unrated limit U1000 \$300, U1300 \$500, U1500 \$700, U1700 \$1000, U1900 \$1500, U2100 \$2000. 2) Under 26 games by Dec. list, limit U1000 \$800, U1300 \$1500, U1500 or U1700 \$3000. 3) If any USCF post-event Regular OTB or Regular Online rating from events ending 12/20/25-12/20/26, or current Online Regular rating, was more than 40 points over section maximum, limit \$1500. 4) Balance of any limited prize goes to next eligible player(s) in line.

Cannot play U2300/lower below USCF Online Regular rating - 100 pts.

Mixed Doubles: \$2000-1000-500-300-200. See chessevents.us.

Top 6 sections entry fee: \$245 at chessaction.com by 9/20, \$275 by 12/23, \$300 later online or at site until 1 hour before round 1. **Open Section \$800 additional fee unless** USCF-rated 2300+ or FIDE rated 2100+.

Special entry fee: U1000 Section \$150 less, Senior 65/over in U1300/up, \$100 less. Re-entry (no Open) \$120. **Foreign GM Minimum prize:** see chessevents.us.

Unofficial USCF or Online Regular USCF ratings usually used if otherwise unrated.

5-Day (Open Section), **late reg.** ends 12/26 10 am, rds. 12/26-28 11 & 6, 12/29 10 & 4:30, 12/30 10 am.

4-Day late reg. ends 12/26 5 pm, rounds 12/26 6 pm, 12/27-28 11 & 6, 12/29 10 am & 4:30 pm.

3-Day late reg. ends 12/27 10 am, rounds 12/27 11, 2:30 & 6, 12/28 11 & 6, 12/29 10 & 4:30.

1/2-pt byes OK all, limit 3 (limit 2 in last 4 rds). Must commit before round 3.

More rules at chessevents.us **Bring set, board, clock** if possible- players supply their own equipment.

USCF membership required; see chessevents.us for special rates.

Special room rate at Horseshoe \$109-109-139-169, plus \$20/day additional resort fee. Use link at chessevents.us or 800-833-3308. Rooms may sell out in Nov.

Entry: chessaction.com. No mail entries, no checks. Refunds, \$15 service charge.

Questions and email: chessstour.com, director@chess.us.

Blitz tournament 12/29 10:30 pm. Enter online by 7 pm 12/29 for lowest fee. Reg. ends 9:30 pm.



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US CHESS would like to recognize and thank
all of our Affiliates for their commitment and hard work.

US CHESS GOLD AFFILIATES

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San Jose, CA
408.409.6596
www.bayareachess.com

Berkeley Chess School

Berkeley, CA
510.384.1507
www.berkeleychessschool.org

Capital Area Chess

Centreville, VA
703.627.5314
www.capitalareachess.com

Caveman Chess

Park Ridge, IL
224.985.5244
www.cavemanchess.com

Charlotte Chess Center

Charlotte, NC
980.265.1156
www.charlottechesscenter.org

CHESSanity

Jericho, NY
917.678.2077
www.chessanity.org

Continental Chess Association

Pelham, NY
201.347.2269
www.chesstour.co

Dirigo Chess Club

Falmouth, ME
207.318.4630
www.dirigochessclub.org/

Florida Scholastic Chess League

Hialeah, FL
786.755.FSCL (3725)
www.fsclchess.org/

Grand Knights Chess Academy

Bellevue, WA
425.445.8588
www.grandknightschess.com/

Hamden Chess Club

Hamden, CT
203.680.8456
www.playmorechess.com/

King Registration

Chicago, IL
773.317.8347
www.kingregistration.com/

Marshall Chess Club

New York, NY
212.477.3716
www.marshallchessclub.org

New York State Chess Association

New York, NY
646-232-3155
<https://nysca.net/>

Ocean State Chess Association

Riverside, R.I.
401.212.1335
oceanstatechess.com/

PaperClip Pairings

Brownsville, TX
956.621.0377

San Diego Chess Club

San Diego, CA
619.752.4377
www.sandiegochessclub.org

Saint Louis Chess Club

Saint Louis, MO
314.361.CHESS (2437)
saintlouischessclub.org/

Washington Chess Federation

Redmond, WA
206.769.3757
www.wachess.com

US CHESS SILVER AFFILIATES

Boca Raton Chess Club (FL)

www.bocachess.com

CDA Collin County Chess Club (TX)

www.coramdeoacademy.org/chess

ChessPalace (CA)

www.chesspalace.com

Cincinnati Scholastic Chess (OH)

www.chesscincinnati.com

Downriver Chess Club (LA)

www.downriverchess.com

Evangel Chess Club (AL)

evangelchurch.me

Little House of Chess, Inc. (NY)

littlehouseofchess.org

Michigan Chess Association (MI)

www.michess.org

MVP Chess (VA)

www.mvpchess.org

Rochester Chess Center (NY)

www.chessset.com

Texas Chess Center (TX)

www.texaschesscenter.com

TLA CHESS (VA)

jack.scheible@verizon.net

For all information on becoming a Gold or Silver Affiliate, please visit <https://new.uschess.org/gold-and-silver-affiliates>.

CORRESPONDENCE CHESS

Check out these US Chess Rated Events!

7-Player Championship Events

2026 Golden Knights (Postal) | 2026 Electronic Knights

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as single round robin, groupings based on order entries received. Players start in Preliminary round and qualify for Semi-final and then Final rounds based on scores in previous round. **ENTRY FEE:** \$35 per entry. Players can enter up to a maximum of 10 times per event. **PRIZES:** Prize fund of \$2300 based on 200 entries. \$15 correspondence chess gift certificate to players knocked out in Preliminary round.

7-Player Round Robins

Victor Palciauskas Tournament (ICCF Server)

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as single round robin, groupings based on ratings. **ENTRY FEE:** \$5 per entry. **PRIZES:** 1st place receives a signed certificate.

4-Player Quads

John W. Collins Memorial (Postal) | Walter Muir E-Quads (ICCF Server)

FORMAT: Players play 6 games as double round robin, groupings based on ratings. **ENTRY FEE:** \$10 per entry. **PRIZES:** 1st place receives \$25 correspondence chess gift certificate and signed certificate.

2-Player Matches (Postal or Email)

FORMAT: Players play either 2, 4, or 6 games against the same opponent. Selecting multiple options may facilitate faster pairings. Pairings based on ratings or players may name their own opponent. **ENTRY FEE:** \$5 per entry. **PRIZES:** None.

ICCF
Server

Two ways to enter:

- Visit us online at uschess.org
- Mail in the form below

GENERAL INFORMATION

- US Chess membership must remain current for the duration of all events.
- Postal events are open only to US Chess members who reside on the contiguous USA, Alaska, Hawaii or have an APO/FPO postal address.
- Email events are open to all US Chess members with an accessible email account.
- ICCF Server events are open to all US Chess members with access to the ICCF internet based correspondence chess server and an ICCF account (free to create) in good standing.
- For events with groupings based on ratings, the following rating classes will be used:
 - o Class A: 1800 and above
 - o Class B: 1500-1999
 - o Class C: 1200-1699
 - o Class D: 1399 and below
- If you do not have an existing correspondence rating, please estimate your playing strength when submitting your entry.
- Correspondence chess gift certificate prizes can be used on correspondence chess entries only. They cannot be used for membership renewals or at US Chess Sales.

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Solutions

PAGE 13 CHESS TO ENJOY

PROBLEM 1. 31. Qe6! threatens 32. Qg8+, and if 31. ... Rf7 32. Ne5. Black resigned after **31. ... 0-0-0 32. Nf6+**. **PROBLEM 2. 22. Rg3** is good; if 22. ... Qxf5 23. Rxf7. But better is **22. Re4!**, e.g. 22. ... Ngxf5 23. Qxc6+ and 24. Bxg5. Black resigned after **22. ... Qxg2+ 23. Kxg2 Bxe4+ 24. Kf2 Bxf5 25. Bg5. PROBLEM 3. 32. Qe7!**, **Black resigned.** White threatens 33. Be8! and 34. Rf8 mate. If 32. ... Qg7 White wins material with 33. Qxb7. **PROBLEM 4.** The e-pawn wins material after **50. ... e3!**, e.g. 51. fxe3 f2. Or the game continuation, **51. Rh4! Rb1!**. But not 51. ... Rxh4 52. Nxh4 exf2 53. Nf5+ and 54. Ne3). **PROBLEM 5. 42. Rxe7! Rxe7 43. Qg5+ Kf8 (43. ... Rg7 44. Qd8 mate) 44. Qf6+ Ke8 45. Qh8 mate. PROBLEM 6.** There is no more than a draw after 24. ... Qxh3+ 25. Kg1. Black even loses after 25. ... Qg3+ 26. Kh1 g5? 27. Rh2 Rh6 28. Qf2. But **24. ... Nd3!** wins after 25. Bxd3 Qxd2. White resigned after **25. Rxd3 Qxh3+ 26. Kg1 Qg3+ 27. Kh1 g5!** in view of 28. ... Rh6 mate.

PAGE 39 TACTICAL TESTS

TACTIC 1. The king is short of escape squares! **26. Bf4 mate.** Polak – Popczynska, Czech Open, Pardubice 2026. **TACTIC 2.** Loose pieces drop off. Use a discovery to win a rook with **28. ... Ne4+ 29. Kc2 Rxf1.** Mortensen – Kurpiewski, *Chess.com*, 2026. **TACTIC 3.** Promoting a pawn is great, but checkmate is better. White wins with a backward slide: **43. Ra1! c5** (or any Black move; it doesn't matter!) **44. Rh1 mate.** Shakaraliyev – Mam-madli, Shamakhi Open 2026. **TACTIC 4.** Here's a stock mating pattern to know: **39. Bxh7+ Kh8 40. Bg6+ Kg8 41. Qh7 mate.** Zampronha – Novikova, *Chess.com*, 2026. **TACTIC 5.** And another one — a version of the chimney mate! **31. ... Be2+ 32. Kh2 Ng4+ 33. Kh3 Rh1 mate.** Smail – Jiang, *Chess.com*, 2026. **TACTIC 6.** Always look for enemy pieces on the same line or diagonal: **33. Rxe4+! fxe4** And now that the key diagonal is clear ... **34. Bg4+! Kd6 35. Bxc8** wins. Gopal – Yasaswi (var), Biel, 2026. **TACTIC 7.** Another neat mate. White cracks open the king's defenses with **25. Qxg7+ Kxg7 26. Rfxg6+ Kf8 27. Rg8 mate.** Haitin – Ponnio (var), Finland, 2026. **TACTIC 8.** Chess Steps fans will recognize this checkmate pattern: **28. ... Bh3! 29. Rg1 Bg2+! 30. Rxc2 Rh8+ 31. Rh2 Rxh2 mate.** Rabin – Weerasekara, *Chess.com*, 2026. **TACTIC 9. 17. Bb6!** Not 17. Qa3 Nc4 and the bishop drops. **17. ... Qd6** If 17. ... Qd7 18. Qe4 and Black can't save both the rook and the knight. **18. Qxd6!** If 18. Bxa5 Nc6. **18. ... Rxd6 19. Bc7! Re6 20. Bd5!** Kosakowski – Song (var), *Chess.com*, 2026. **TACTIC 10.** Mating threats lurk in even the quietest positions. Black can make good use of the straitjacketed white king with **51. ... Re4!**, threatening to push the c-pawn to promotion and ready for ... g6-g5 mate if the rook leaves the sixth rank (only the e4-square works: if, for instance, 51. ... Rd4 52. Rf6! keeps the pin and frees the e5-pawn). **52. Re6** If 52. Rf6 c4 53. e6 c3 54. e7 Rxe7 55. g4 Rc7!. **52. ... c4 53. Rc6 c3 54. g4** As good a time as any. If 54. Rxc3?? g5 mate. **54. ... hxg4 55. Kg3 55. Rxc3 Rxf4** is winning for Black, as is 55. hxg4 Rxf4. **55.**

... Re3+ and Black is winning. Makarian – Dubnevych (var), *Chess.com*, 2026. **TACTIC 11.** 11-year-old Bodhana Sivanandan took down a 2600+ GM over the board after **28. b4! Qxb4** (or else the knight is lost) **29. Nd5! Qxb2** Or 29. ... Qxe1 30. Nxf6+ Kg7 31. Nxd7+!. **30. Rxb2 Bxb2 31. Nb6** and White won. Sivanandan – Maurizzi, Aix-en-Provence, 2026. **TACTIC 12.** This looks terrible for White, but ... **30. Rd1!** Attack can be the best defense. Nothing else wins: 30. Ka1? Ke7! 31. Nd6? Nc2+; 30. Nf3!? is equal after 30. ... Qb3+ 31. Ka1 Qb2+ 32. Qxb2 axb2+ 33. Kb1!; 30. Qb2? a2+!. **30. ... Rxb7+ 30. ... Qb3+? 31. Ka1 Rxb7 32. Qxd4+; 30. ... Ke7** acquiesces to 31. Qxd4. **31. Ka1!!** Only this! If 31. Ka2? Rb2+. **31. ... Rb4** If 31. ... Ke7 32. Qxd4 Qxd4+ 33. Rxd4. **32. Nf3!** and White will win a piece. Qalichava – Niazyan (var), Poti Open, 2026.

PAGE 49 ABCS OF CHESS

PROBLEM 1. White mates in 2: **1. Qb7+ Kd8 2. Ne6 mate. PROBLEM 2.** White mates in 2: **1. Qc5+ Ka4 2. Qa5 mate. PROBLEM 3.** White mates in 2: **1. Nd6+ Kd8 2. Bc7 mate. PROBLEM 4.** White mates in 2: **1. Qf8+ Kd7 2. Nc5 mate. PROBLEM 5.** White mates in 2: **1. Qa5+ Kc6 2. Nd4 mate. PROBLEM 6.** White mates in 2: **1. Nd3+ Kc4 2. b3 mate.**

PAGE 54 PRACTICAL TASKS

POSITION 1. 15. Nxe5! The only clearly winning move. **15. ... dxe5 16. d6 Bxd6 17. Qxd6 Qxd6 18. Rxd6** Black is left with a damaged position and weak pawns. **18. ... Be6 19. Bg5 Nfe8 20. Rb6! f6 21. Be3 Rf7 22. Bxc5** And White smoothly converted. Carlsten – Hoebarth, World Senior 65+, Gallipoli, 2025. **POSITION 2. 22. bxa4?** was played in the game, but it's the wrong structural decision. The game continued 22. ... e6! (Perhaps White missed that Black doesn't have to recapture immediately) 23. Nf3 (23. Rd4? is not possible due to 23. ... Bc5!) 23. ... Rxa4 24. Ra1, when White was forced to defend the a3-pawn passively. Black went on to win. But **22. b4!** creates a protected passed pawn, while leaving Black's a4-pawn susceptible to attack with Ne2-c3. Rivero Reyes – Lorenzo, Spain, 2024 (analysis). **POSITION 3. 16. Qxe4!** Forced. Black is only slightly better here. Instead, 16. Rxe4? Nc5! was played, when Black won the Exchange and the game. Svarc – Van Acker, NATO Chess, Rhodes, 2025 (analysis). **POSITION 4.** White has just played **10. Na4?** You should always be careful when making a move to the side of the board; there is often an effective response in the center. Here Black played **10. ... e4!** Curiously, the White player had played 10. Na4 in another game just days before. There, Black responded with 10. ... Nxa4 11. Qxa4 a6 and the position was level. **11. dxe4?** 11. Nd2 exd3 gives Black a clean extra pawn, although this is the best chance; 11. Nxb6 lets Black show the main point: After 11. ... exf3! 12. Nxa8 fxe2 13. Rg1 Qxa8 14. Rxc2 material is roughly equal, but White's king lacks a safe haven and Black's minor pieces will dominate. **11. ... Qxd1+ 12. Rxd1 Nxa4** and Black is winning. Norinkeviute – Liu, Hastings Open, 2024. **POSITION 5.** Black's "solidifying" previous move, 22. ... c6, in fact grants White a tactical opportunity. **23. Ba5!** Deflecting Black's queen. Not 23.

Qxe4? Nxc3+. **23. ... Qxa5 24. Qxe4** White is up an Exchange for no compensation. Guerrero – Cabrera, Spain, 2024. **POSITION 6. 28. Bc1!** This retreating move could be hard to spot, but it wins immediately. **28. ... g6** If 28. ... Qb3 29. Rxa4 Qxa4 30. Qxf7+. **29. Bxa3 gxf5 30. Rxa4, Black resigned.** Obada – Sariteanu, Romanian Women's Ch, 2024. **POSITION 7. 18. ... Bxf3!** Eliminating the defender of both the d4-rook and the h2-pawn. **19. Bxf3 Qe5!** Black wins material. **20. Rxd6 Qxd6 21. g3 Rad8** and Black went on to convert. Kisil – Platovskiy, Lviv, 2026. **POSITION 8. 16. f3!** The plan of f2-f3 and e3-e4 is White's standard idea in this Exchange QGD structure. It is also the only really constructive idea in this position! It's too soon for 16. e4?; after 16. ... dxe4 17. Nxe4 Nxe4 18. Rxe4 Qxe4 19. Qxe4 Rxe4 20. Bxe4 Be6 White has weakened her structure for no special reason and Black is better. **16. ... Be6 17. e4 Rad8** Black's best was 17. ... Nh5!, aiming at f4 and getting out of the way of e4-e5. Even so, White's still better after 18. exd5 cxd5 19. Re5. **18. e5! Nh7?! 18. ... Nh5** was still better, though White keeps an advantage. **19. Qd2** White was much better and went on to win. Rzakowska – Zapalowska, Polish Women's Ch semifinal, 2025. **POSITION 9. 10. ... g5!** Beginning a strong plan of ... g5-g4 and kingside attack, using the hook on h3. **11. Kh1?** Not doing anything to oppose Black's plan. 11. d4! was the best chance: 11. ... exd4? 12. cxd4 Nxd4?! 13. Nxd4 Bxd4 14. Bxf7+! Qxf7 15. Qa4+ shows what White is going for. Having said that, even without this tactic, it doesn't make sense for Black to open the center: Black would still get an edge with 11. ... g4 12. hxg4 Nxg4 13. Be3 Rg8. **11. ... g4! 12. Ng1?** There was more resistance after 12. Nh2 gxf3 13. g3. **12. ... gxf3** With a winning attack. Demiroers – Goyal, Muenster, 2025.

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Years ago, while visiting Italy, I took a daytrip to Torcello, a tiny town of 11 outside of Venice.

Can this thing go any faster?



I went there to see an old church that had been founded in 639 and "Attila's Throne."

Nothing to do with the king of the Huns



Very uncomfortable

And in part, I went to see an old man I'd read about in a blog (this was 2009).

LiveJournal.com

the main walk to the cathedral from the vaporetto stop. If you know how to play chess, be on the lookout for the chess board set up in a small garden – and an old Torcello man who'll invite you over for a game.

What to See: C
Maria Assunta

How do you say "Checkmate" in Italian?

My chess was poor at the time, but it seemed too quaint an opportunity to pass up.



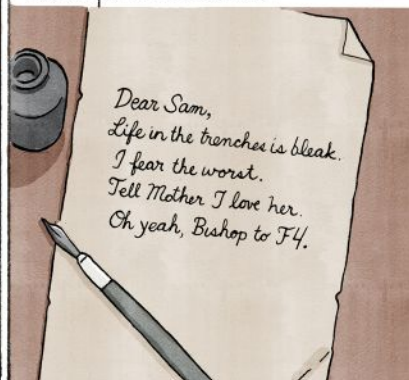
He was easy to find in a town of 11.

His look of disappointment was almost immediate.

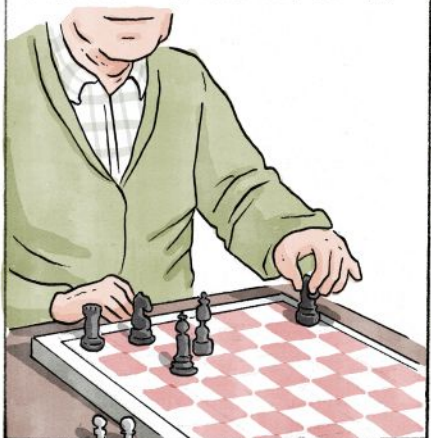


How you say "checkmate" in Italian.

This was 2009, only a few years after Chess.com went live. When chess was still played primarily in person (unless you played correspondence chess).



What else could he do but sit in his garden, hoping for a chance encounter with a curious tourist?



I guess beggars can be choosers.

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